

**ESSENTIAL  
STANDARD  
no.4**

# Safe Use of Telehandlers



## KEY MESSAGES

- Plan and manage the use of telehandlers properly.
- Ensure that the telehandler is in safe condition and all the required inspections have been carried out.
- Only use a telehandler if a safer method, such as a purpose made crane, is not available.
- Provide adequate training for operators, supervisors and managers.
- Ensure that site conditions allow telehandlers to move safely, for example, check for unsound surfaces and avoid excessive slopes.
- Ensure traffic routes are planned to minimise the interface with telehandlers and pedestrians.

## 1. Introduction

Telehandlers (also known as rough terrain telescopic handlers or variable reach trucks) are widely used throughout the industry for moving materials and goods, traditionally undertaken by mobile and tower cranes. Unfortunately due to their versatility, they also feature prominently in workplace incidents. The safe operation depends on a number of factors including the selection and maintenance of the plant, the planning and supervision of its use, and the competence of the operator. Telehandlers can be fitted with a wide range of attachments such as buckets, skips, work platforms and crane jibs. The purpose of this document is to provide a standard and examples of good practice which encourage the correct selection and use of telehandlers.



## 2. Managing Lifting Operations



All work involving telehandlers must be planned by a competent person, appropriately supervised and carried out in a safe manner.



Use risk assessments to identify hazards associated with telehandlers and lifting plans to ensure safe lifting operations.

Where a telehandler is to be used as a crane for lifting suspended loads, additional planning is required by a competent person. Planning is also required for other non-standard lifting operations such as unusual loads, or circumstances, special attachments and use in tight areas where contact with other structures could be hazardous.

Ensure that all operators have been properly briefed during induction and during lift plan briefings on how to use telehandlers safely. This training must include:

- The authorisation for use system
- A competence check
- Familiarisation and pre-use checks
- The limitations of the machine – including limitations of lifting in different configurations
- Awareness of the environment
- Avoidance of unplanned works



Pocket cards can be a good way to remind operators of key points for safe use:

### SAFETY WITH FORKLIFTS AND TELEHANDLER



# Don't

- ✗ Carry Passengers.
- ✗ Raise or lower people off forks.
- ✗ Travel with load raised.
- ✗ Obstruct visibility.
- ✗ Park with forks raised.
- ✗ Leave keys in ignition when parked.
- ✗ Use unauthorised attachments.

### SAFETY WITH FORKLIFTS AND TELEHANDLER



# Do

- ✓ CHECK DAILY: tyres, brakes (hand and foot), steering, fluid and oil levels, condition of forks, hoses and lifting gear generally, all controls.
- ✓ Report any defects immediately.
- ✓ Drive at a safe speed.
- ✓ Ensure the load is stable and secure.
- ✓ Know the rated Safe Working Load (SWL) and understand loading charts.

*NOTE: Telehandlers have a reduced S.W.L when the load is suspended. Use the correct load chart.*

## 3. Selecting Equipment

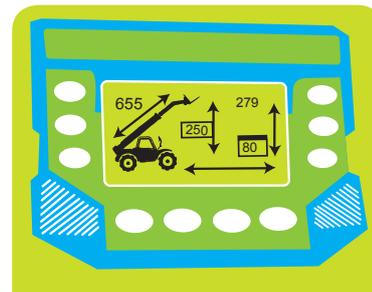
Make sure you select the most suitable equipment for the task during the planning stage. There have been an increasing number of incidents where telehandlers, mobile plant and transport in general have been used for jobs they are not designed for.

Plan lifting operations so that the most appropriate machine can be used. For example, use a crane for a lifting operation rather than a telehandler with a jib attachment to avoid any equipment from toppling over.



When selecting equipment, consider the following:

- **Know the machine** – always follow the manufacturer's specifications and guidelines.
- **Rated Capacity Indicators (RCI)** – machines should be fitted with RCIs, or Load Moment Indicators, which will warn if the machine is about to be overloaded. It must always be switched on during load handling jobs. Maintain and test RCI's according to the manufacturer's or authorised supplier's instructions as part of the inspection regime required under PUWER. Tell operators it is an offence to intentionally interfere with RCI's (Section 9 of the HSW Act).
- **Limits of the equipment** – the load capacity of the truck will vary according to the extension of the boom and its degree of elevation.
- **Modes of operations** – some machines have 2 modes of operation. 1. fork lift (ability to extend boom is disabled) and 2. telehandler (fully functional).
- **Lifting configurations** – on some machines the lifting capability changes depending on the method used to carry the load e.g. underslung loads rather than carried on the forks.
- **Load charts** – vary depending on the method of attaching the load and the use of stabilisers.
- **Attachments** – alter the load capacity and centre of gravity of the machine.
- **Longitudinal stability indicators** – helps prevent the machine from tipping forward, but is not a safe load indicator.



## 4. Training and Competence

Operators must be properly trained in all aspects of the machine's operation and have a valid competency card, e.g., CPCS or NPORS. Operators must read the operating manual and familiarise themselves with the equipment. Employers must observe the day-to-day activities to ensure that the operators show competence.

As a guide, operators should be:

- Older than 18 and sufficiently mature
- Fit (good eyesight, hearing and reflexes and be medically examined at least every 5 years)
- Physically capable of operating the machine without undue fatigue
- Able to judge distance, height, speed and perspective
- Familiar with the equipment and competent to use it

Make sure that only operators who have been given authorisation operate the machine, and that unauthorised operators are prevented from using it.



## 5. The Working Area

When planning traffic routes, attention should be paid to reducing risks at points where telehandlers may meet other vehicles or pedestrians. Routes must be suitable with regard to width, gradient, stability and free from obstructions. Where possible, pedestrians should be prohibited from entering areas where telehandlers are operating. Where this is not possible an assessment of the risks must be made and, where necessary, control measures implemented to adequately control the risks:



Guidelines to follow when in the working area:



- Face the boom uphill when travelling up or down slopes with a load. As far as possible avoid travelling across slopes.



- Wear restraining systems, such as seat belts, whenever there is a risk of overturning. Keep doors shut to prevent being ejected and crushed in the event of an overturn.



- Carry attachments and loads so they don't present a hazard to other road users when travelling on public roads. Put the boom in the lowest practicable position.



- Use visibility aids such as convex mirrors, CCTV, sensing aids or banksmen when there is poor visibility, for example when the boom position blocks visibility.



- Check for overhead obstructions before raising loads.



- Banksmen should be in a safe place and visible to the operator at all times.

- Don't raise loads if there is a possibility of contact with or arcing from overhead power lines.

- Keep people away from the machine and make arrangements to prevent unintentional movement of the machine when people are nearby.



## 6. Inspection and Maintenance

- Ensure telehandlers are inspected by a competent person when they arrive on site, like any mobile plant, to check that they comply with the legal requirements and are safe to use.
- Always follow maintenance required by the manufacturer's manual.
- Carry out thorough examinations at regular intervals as required by the Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations.
- Operators must carry out daily inspections and competent persons must carry out weekly inspections.
- Use checklists to ensure all areas that could affect the safe operation of the machine are covered in the pre-use check.
- Don't use machines that may have defective RCI's.
- Record, report and remedy any defects.

