

# AFIA



Australian Fodder Industry Association

## Top 10 hazards: Telehandlers

### Fodder Safety Brief



#### Top 10 hazards when working with a telehandler

Tractors used to be the number one piece of machinery on most farms, it holds a special place in farming culture. Perhaps it was a fixture on the family farm growing up, or maybe it was a shared obsession over big machines. Whilst the good old tractor has been the most reliable machine to assist with manual tasks over the years, it has been super passed by the improved technology of the telehandler.

There are a number of reasons why we are seeing a common trend of telehandlers replacing tractors. Their versatile attachments suit multiple tasks, moving feed, unloading pallets, and yes stacking hay bales.

With these additional abilities, its easy to see how productivity levels are on the rise. When compared to a forklift, telehandlers offer a high-load capacity, lifting heavier loads to greater heights over longer distances. Without having to change machines, workers get more done in less time.

Telehandlers are the ideal machine for tight spaces often found when feeding livestock or lifting and loading. Providing four-wheel drive capabilities, telehandlers can be as comfortable off road as they are on it when operated in the correct manner.

#### What is it?

In case you've gotten this far without knowing exactly what a telehandler is. Also known as a telescopic handler, variable reach truck or boom lift.

Not to be confused with a normal forklift, telehandlers are vehicles identifiable by their extendable boom that moves forwards and upwards. Modern telehandlers are designed so that operators can change lifting attachments to complete various tasks. Attachments can include hooks, winches, jibs, clamps and buckets.

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*Vehicle incidents account for 25 per cent of worker fatalities, followed by rollover of non-road vehicles.*

[\*Priority Industry Snapshot 2018, Safe Work Australia\*](#)

#### Top 10 hazards of a telehandler

Playing such a large role in the Fodder Industry, we've chosen to address the top 10 hazards when operating a telehandler to, hopefully, keep you and your workers safe.

### 1. Overturning or Tipping

Telehandlers are subject to the laws of gravity, overloading or an extended boom increases the likelihood of overturning. Keep load low and close to the machine to maintain stability. Level your machine by means of the level indicator before raising any load.

### 2. Unstable ground

Soft and uneven ground is associated with overturning, review your site conditions and compare it to the operators manual, consider your machines limitations and Safe Work Procedure. Stabilisers are to be in contact with a firm, stable surface. Ensure stabiliser indicator lamp is on before using the boom.

### 3. Electrocution

Always assess the operating environment, ensuring you keep clear of live cables and overhead powerlines. Consider the vehicles route as it moves around the farm, check the minimum safe distance for electrical hazards. Look at exclusion zones, barricades and consider a spotter.

### 4. Struck by a telehandler

You need to be aware of blind spots and any workers, pedestrians or bystanders. Install well placed mirrors, reversing camera, utilise a spotter, ensure reversing alarms are fitted and limit access to your loading zone.

### 5. Struck by falling material

Telehandler operators should always carry their load as low as possible without dragging them. Before lifting or moving a load, operators should ensure it is balanced and secure. When moving, travel with the load 20 to 30cm from the ground and at no more than 5km/h.

### 6. Poorly maintained machinery and attachments

It is an essential aspect of safe operations to perform maintenance checks and inspections, monitor and fix any damage or deterioration to your telehandler. Both your telehandler and attachments are to be maintained in line with the manufacturer's instructions to keep them in safe working condition.

[To create your own Safe Work Procedures, policies, inductions and more, start a free trial with Safe Ag Systems.](#)

### 7. Unsafe work procedures

Operators must have the appropriate license, correct training and familiarisation with machinery. High Risk Work Licenses are required in Australia when operating a telehandler with a load capacity of three tonnes. Always check the weight of the load before attempting to handle and refer to load charts.

### 8. Attachments inappropriately used as work platforms

Telehandlers can be fitted with a range of attachments including work platforms. These platforms are attached to the telehandlers boom in order to provide access when working at heights. You should never use a telehandler with a makeshift work platform.

### 9. Use approved attachments only

Telehandler operators should use attachments that are fit-for-purpose, refer to the telehandlers manufacturer's guide. Match the attachment to the type and size of the load and follow procedures when fitting or removing attachments. Use approved attachments only.

### 10. Unexpected movement

Normally related to swinging motion when you have a hook or jib attachment with a suspended load. Suspended loads and turning with loads is more likely to impact the stability of a telehandler. Never start, stop or suddenly change direction at high speed.

Formal training and assessment by a qualified trainer is essential for telehandler use. Display warning signs and speed limits where appropriate, create a traffic management plan and identify unsuitable areas on your site map.

## Remember, to safely use a telehandler:

- Use approved attachments
- Keep load low and close to the machine
- Look in the direction you are driving
- Travel no more than 5km/h
- Avoid operating on side slopes
- Regularly service and perform maintenance checks
- Evaluate the risks with a risk assessment
- Follow Safe Work Procedures



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