



Digger Derricks

Derrick truck operators face hazards when climbing up and down a derrick with the boom rotated

Restoring downed power lines is considered routine work for utility crews. Operating a digger derrick is viewed as a low-risk activity. But on a rainy December night, a derrick truck operator responding to a car-struck pole, climbed down to take a closer look at the job as a matter of routine. He fell 10 feet as he climbed back into the operator's seat. No one witnessed the fall, but a crew member heard it and found the injured co-worker unresponsive, lying on the ground.

Access to handholds is adequate when the boom is in a stowed position, but not when it is in a rotated position. At the time of the incident, the truck's boom was rotated toward the back-right-corner of the truck.

The employee suffered significant injuries. He spent three weeks in the hospital and a rehabilitation center. Nine months after the incident, the employee had not returned to work.

An investigation found:

- The employee fell when he lost his grip and footing while climbing up to an elevated seat. The boom was not in the forward position.
- Operators occasionally get down from the seat to help workers on the ground, even though the boom cannot be rotated to the forward position.
- The employee did not follow the operator training, which included maintaining three points of contact, using access ladders and steps to climb up and down, and not leaving the seat when there is a suspended load.



To prevent recurrence of such an accident the following recommendations are offered:

- Educate employees about hazards of getting on and off the equipment.
- Instruct employees that if it is necessary to climb down off the operator seat, ask for help or return the seat to normal position where handholds are available.
- When the equipment is replaced, advocate for a safer egress design when the boom is in operation.

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Hazard alerts provide information on hazardous materials, equipment, or practices. OR-OSHA 2993-34 (3/17)
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