



Civil Construction & Mining Guidelines for Safe Hands Free Lifting

What is Safe Hands Free Lifting?

The most hazardous parts of a lifting operation are hoisting and landing of the load. Therefore at these critical stages, personnel must be as far away from the load as possible in case the load shifts or drops. To ensure this happens, it is essential to adopt a “hands-free” lifting guideline that is rigidly followed.

Once a load is connected to a mechanical lifting device, personnel should not handle or touch a load with any part of their body as the load is being lifted or before the load is properly set down and all potential energy is released.

However, there will always be certain jobs which will require “hands-on” for final positioning. These should be treated as exceptions to the norm and fully addressed in the risk assessment process with special attention given to the risk of injury to fingers, hands, toes and feet.

Objective of Safe Hands Free Lifting

To eliminate the risk of injury to personnel from pinch points, caught between zones, entanglement hazards and a reduced field of vision.

What are the benefits of Safe Hands Free Lifting?

- Significantly reduces crush, entanglement and hand injuries.
- Clears you of the potential injury zone for dropped objects.
- Clears you of the potential swing area.
- Personnel can see more of the load zone.
- Better posture when pushing and pulling objects.
- Less strain on the lower back and neck area.
- Creates a strong safety culture for all project personnel.

Can every load be guided with Safe Hands Free Lifting?

MOSTLY, but there *may* be times when due to restricted work space, working from elevated work platforms, awkward angles and body posture, that hands will need to be used.

HOWEVER, every load must be assessed in real time as part of the Safe Work Planning process. Remember to document and communicate the process to be used with all involved employees.

How is Safe Hands Free Lifting achieved?

1. The Correct Mindset

Changing the way we have done things for years always results in an element of “pushback” from people set in their ways. We have to persevere with fresh ideas or we will never change things for the better. It is a natural reaction to hold the rigging in place until the tension is taken up to make sure the load is properly slung and balanced. Nevertheless, how often have you heard of people getting hands, fingers and body pinched, trapped or crushed by the rigging?

2. Tag Lines

Tag lines must be attached to a load prior to lifting and provided at the appropriate length to allow employees to stay clear of the drop zone and any pinch/crush points the load may create.

Whether or not to use tag lines has always been a debatable point, but the consensus of opinion is that although their use can introduce additional hazards, their use generally increases the safety of the lift. Having said that, the advantages and disadvantages will be considered and their use determined during the risk assessment and documented.

3. Push / Pull Sticks

Push / Pull sticks are simply wooden or fiber glass poles with a boat hook at one end and a rubber or leather pad at the other. Ideally, these should be about 2 meters / 6 feet long. Their primary use is to retrieve tag lines hanging vertically down from the load so that personnel do not have to get too close to the suspended load. Their secondary use is to push and maneuver loads into the correct orientation / position for landing or guiding them into tight spaces while remaining hands-free / hands-off.

Achieving “hands-free” lifting is not difficult; it is an awareness of the hazards and planning the work and working the plan. If you do come up against jobs that appear to require “hands-on”, think long and hard about how you can change that and if you think it needs special tools or equipment to achieve “hands-free”.

What has to happen if you put your hands on the load?

- Safe Work Planning.
- Use proper gloves.
- Agree on the communication method within the lift group.
- Never touch the load with your arm higher than your shoulder level.
- Use hooks to pull tag lines away from the drop zone.
- Keep out of the drop zone.
- Look ahead for the pinch points and crush zones.

Mandatory Safe Hand Practices

- All personnel must have GLOVES in possession 100% of the time.
- Proper GLOVES must be worn anytime there is a potential hazard to the hands.
- All Hoisted Loads should only be touched with a HANDS FREE TOOL.
- DO NOT place any part of your body under a suspended load.

These Guidelines for Safe Hands Free Lifting are in addition to any requirements of the URS Safety Management Standards (SMS).

Safe Hands Free Lifting Tools



Rubber dipped or vinyl coated tag lines prevent curling of rope. Eliminates trip and entanglement hazards.

Example of aluminium boat hook modified for Safe Hands Free Lifting. One end rubberised for controlled pushing. Hook ideal for pulling tag lines to you and not walking into the drop zone.



Other tool options for Safe Hands Free Lifting



Photo Examples

