

Distracted Work at Height - Don't Do It!

It is recommended that workers on swing stage platforms carry a cell phone or radio to communicate with ground-based personnel or supervision in case of an emergency. A form of communication is required on all adjustable swing stages.

Although the availability of a cell phone or now smart phone with recording or photo capability may be useful in an emergency, it can also present a dangerous distraction to equipment operators working at height.

Tempted to tweet, IM, check on a game schedule, take a cool picture, and share it with your friends? Don't do it! One must stay focused to the task at hand!

Operators on powered suspended platforms must:

- maintain contact with the operating buttons on the hoist
- manage their rope grab/lanyard for correct placement – Keeping the grab as high as possible on the safety line.
- manage any additional PPE for correct position - i.e., respiration lines
- monitor the wire rope as it enters the hoist and verify its path out of the hoist
- watch the other side of the platform if a 2 hoist or multi-hoist platform to maintain a level platform
- watch the co-operator(s) on a 2-hoist or multi-hoist platforms to ensure all are ready to begin ascent/descent at the same time.
- monitor the platform or work cage ascent or descent to avoid snagging the platform or cords and lines on the façade or structure.
- monitor weather and wind conditions to avoid storm-related risks

Managing these duties is in itself a full-time job – before you get to actually doing the work to the quality and production standards of your employer. Adding texting, talking on the phone, tweeting, or posting photos online and the results can be catastrophic.

Some professions abolish all extra communications during their operations – police, fire & rescue, emergency room personnel are a few - because they are eliminating distractions, so all their focus goes to the situation and protecting the people they serve. Many industrial facilities ban the use of cell phones entirely when driving on their property. Even hands-free talking diverts the driver's attention from the key task of driving. Hands free talking is required in many states and provinces.

Employers need to make the same restrictions against non-emergency phone/text conversations and smart-phone usage for work at height.

Talking to one's wife/girlfriend/buddy/team can wait. Focusing your attention on your safety gear, the equipment and your work must be the first and only priority. Everything else can wait until a lunch break, the end of the shift or some other time.

Get the work done safely, get to the ground and get home to your life. It's worth putting you first.

This Technical Bulletin was prepared by members of the Scaffold & Access Industry Association SSFI Committee.

SSFI is a committee comprising manufacturers of shoring, scaffolding, forming, and suspended scaffolding. The committee focuses on engineering and safety aspects of scope products.

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