

Safety Alert

Improvised lift technique amputates worker's thumb

The purpose of this Safety Alert is to highlight the dangers of using improvised lifting techniques with an excavator's dipper arm to move heavy objects.

Background

A civil construction worker suffered a crush injury at a Palmerston worksite which severed their thumb in early August this year.

The incident occurred when the injured worker attempted to remove concrete pavers from underneath steel road trench plates, as the trench plates were being lifted.

Instead of connecting a hook and chain to the designated lifting point on the trench plate and lifting using the excavator, a decision was made to push up the trench plate using the quick hitch lug on the dipper arm.

The trench plate slipped off the quick hitch lug as it was being lifted causing the incident.



Image: The incident site showing the trench plates being held up by improvised dunnage. **(Insert)** The worker receiving medical treatment for their injury.

Possible contributing factors

- The quick hitch lug on the dipper arm was used as an improvised lifting point.
- The metal trench plate could have slipped off the quick hitch lug due to metal-on-metal slippage.
- The worker's hands were in the crush zone, and the worker in the lift exclusion zone, as the excavator was lifting the trench plate.
- The lift was a non-routine lift and did not follow the worksites safe operating procedure for lifting with excavator attachments.

Action required

- Always use manufacturer designated lifting points on the dipper arm with approved lifting equipment to lift objects.

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- Workers must be clear of the lift exclusion zone in case of falling objects, swinging loads, or equipment failure.
- Always follow established safe operating procedures.
- Before starting a non-routine lift, undertake a risk assessment by identifying the hazards, assessing the risks and implementing the control measures.

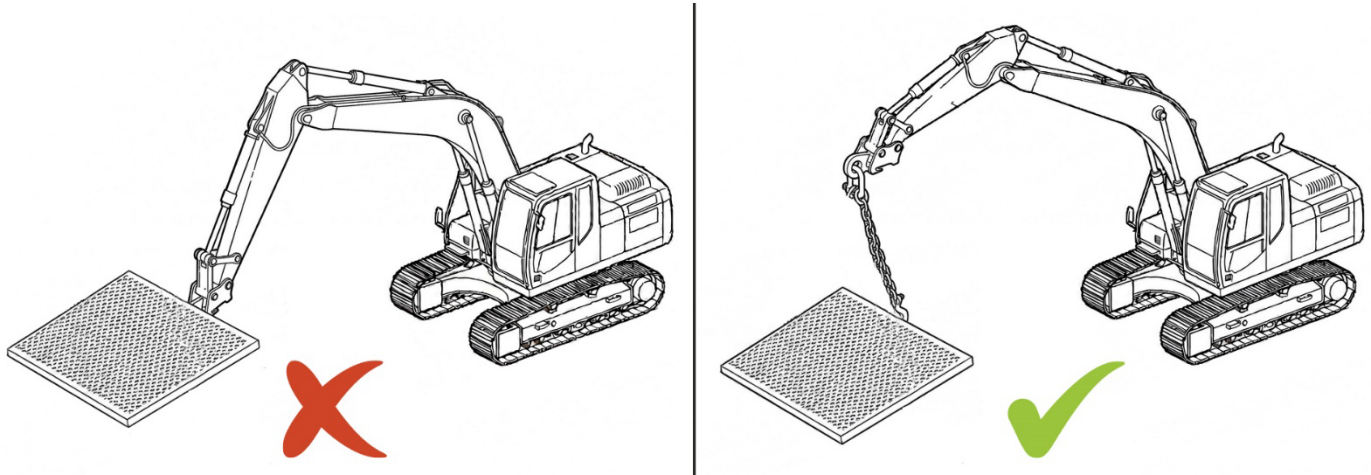


Diagram: (Left) Incorrect lifting technique using the quick hitch lug as an improvised lifting point. (Right) Correct lifting technique using designated lifting points on the dipper arm and lifting point on the trench plate.

Further information

For further information, please refer to the following:

Codes of Practice

- [Managing the risks of plant in the workplace](#)
- [How to manage work health and safety risks](#)

Guidance Material

- [Using earthmoving machinery as a crane to suspend a load](#) (WorkSafe WA)
- [Earthmoving equipment to lift loads](#) (SafeWork SA)

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