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# Worker crushed by falling load

**20 October 2021**

A 59-year-old crane operator has sustained serious crush injuries while unloading a 2.8-tonne air conditioning unit from a truck in Thornleigh. The worker was operating a vehicle loading crane to lift the unit using a remote control. As the unit was lifted, two slings failed. The unit fell onto the worker pinning him against a wall.



*Vehicle loading crane and truck*



*2.8 tonne air conditioning unit*

## Safety information

Sudden failure of soft slings (also known as synthetic fibre slings) can result in serious or fatal injuries. Failure commonly occurs when soft slings are damaged by sharp edges (either on the load or coming into contact with obstructions), or by excessive exposure to UV light, dirt, chemicals, or oils. These failures can occur even when using soft slings below their working load limit (WLL).

Implement 'reasonably practicable' control measures to manage the risks associated with the operation of vehicle-loading cranes (VLCs).

## Training and licencing

- ensure operators are trained in how to use your particular model of crane
- if the crane has a capacity of 10 metre tonnes the operator must hold a High-Risk Work Licence, class CV, or equivalent.

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The information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of writing and the findings are not yet confirmed. SafeWork NSW has commenced an investigation in response to the incident to determine its cause and circumstances. No conclusions should be drawn from the information in this publication about the cause of the incident or the culpability of any party.

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### Follow manufacturer's instructions

- maintain the crane and lifting equipment according to the manufacturer's instructions
- before each use, inspect the crane and lifting equipment including soft slings (i.e. pre-start check)
- maintain records of all inspection and maintenance activities.

### Plan the task carefully

- plan the job, taking into account site set-up, load movement, underground and overhead service proximity
- establish exclusion zones to separate people from moving plant and loads
- use the most appropriate lifting equipment and rigging technique for the load. Consider the load's weight, size, geometry, and centre of gravity
- a lift should never be commenced until the operator has conducted appropriate checks to ensure that a load is appropriately slung
- operate the crane from a position that allows clear vision of the load at all times or use a licenced dogger to assist. If using the fixed operating controls, make sure controls are in place to minimise the risk of crush hazards from the boom
- never lift or suspend loads over workers or others, and never allow people to enter the potential fall zone or an area where they can be crushed between the load and fixed structure.

### Advice on soft slings

- soft slings should not be used on sharp edges or in confined areas where they could come in contact with obstructions. Use cut protection around load edges where necessary
- when not in use, store soft slings in a clean, dry environment away from direct sunlight
- every 3 months ensure soft slings are inspected by a competent person.

### More information

- [Working with or around mobile plant - Safety alert](#) – SafeWork NSW
- [Managing the risks of plant in the workplace – Code of Practice](#) – SafeWork NSW
- [Plant, machinery, and equipment information](#) – SafeWork NSW
- [Vehicle loading cranes information sheet](#) – SafeWork Australia
- [High risk work licensing for vehicle loading cranes information sheet](#) – SafeWork Australia
- [Soft sling failures due to incorrect use, Safety Alert – WorkSafe Victoria](#)
- AS 2550.11-2016: Cranes, hoists, and winches - Safe use – Vehicle-loading cranes

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