



INDUSTRY PLANT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

SAFETY ALERT

THE USE OF BAGS TO LIFT BULK MATERIALS

ISSUE

The inappropriate use of certain bags freely suspended from a crane to lift bulk material, such as sand, blue metal and landscape materials. **A recent incident at St Leonards in which a bag carrying aggregate split highlighted the dangers of these bags failing when suspended above a workplace or a public area.**

BACKGROUND

An increasing trend in the construction industry is to supply bulk items, such as sand, blue metal and landscape materials in large bags that are lifted into position by a crane. The loads being lifted are considerable, with bags capable of holding up to two tonnes of sand or other materials.

Many of the bags used for this purpose are susceptible to damage either through their use or exposure to certain substances, including sunlight. Because of this, they are specifically intended to be used once only and should be disposed of after being used for the first time. Problems can be compounded by filling them with materials that could damage the bags, such as items with sharp edges. The consequences of a bag failing while freely suspended from a crane are high, and could cause a major accident.

WHAT SHOULD BE DONE?

General:

To control the risks associated with a freely suspended bag failing, the following should be observed:

- Bags should only be freely suspended when being loaded and offloaded for the purposes of transportation to site; and
- Where it is necessary to lift/lower the material in the bag more than 2.5 metres, either the bags must be placed on a pallet and be properly secured or enclosed by a cage; or the contents must be transferred to an appropriate lifting medium, such as a kibble or a bin.

Suppliers:

Persons who supply plant for use at the workplace must ensure that it is safe when properly used and that sufficient information is provided to ensure it can be used properly. Bags used to lift bulk material should only be supplied with the following information attached:

- the bag's date of manufacture;
- whether the bag is intended for single or multiple use;
- the maximum load the bag can accommodate;

- all restrictions on the use of the bag, including materials that should not be placed in it;
- all precautions to be observed in the storage and use of the bag, in particular whether it is susceptible to damage through exposure to sunlight or chemicals, and such chemicals should be listed; and,
- the slinging requirements for lifting the bag by a crane, which should comply with slinging techniques specified in the WorkCover publication *A guide to rigging*.

This information should be provided on a durable label that is securely fixed to the bag in a prominent position.

On site:

- Bags that arrive on site without the information specified above should not be used.
- Bags that show any sign of damage should not be used.
- All slinging should be carried out by a competent person who may be required to hold a dogging Certificate of Competency, and in compliance with slinging techniques specified in the WorkCover publication *A guide to rigging*.
- Bags that are intended to be used only once should have their tags removed and be effectively put out of service (e.g. by cutting) once they have been used for the first time.
- Bags that are damaged or have been exposed to any chemical listed as being detrimental should also be effectively put out of service, e.g. by cutting.

A WorkCover NSW officer visiting a workplace where bags are being used inappropriately will take appropriate action.

ISSUED BY THE INDUSTRY PLANT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE, JUNE 2003

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