

Remote controls for hoists have frequently been requested of customers using suspended scaffolding. These remotes extend the operating control buttons a measured distance away from the hoist that they are operating.

Remotes are generally added in the following situations:

- There are not enough personnel on the platform to operate each hoist.
- The platform has more than 2 hoists or wraps around a structure, making line of sight between operators impossible without the remote.
- The operator's work is located closer to the middle of the platform and they want to limit back and forth walking to the work area.

Each of these situations can pose different risks to the operator(s). When considering using a hoist with a remote on a job, have a competent person evaluate all of the factors that affect this decision. These factors include, but are not limited to:

- Jobsite conditions
- Platform layout and design
- Type of work being performed by the operator(s)
- Skill and experience level of the operator(s)
- Special training of the operator(s)
- Staffing requirements of the job
- Operator safety in the event of an emergency
- Identified hazards (jobsite, platform, etc.)
- Emergency Planning and rescue

Caution:

The decision to install remote controls to any hoist should be cautiously considered. There are situations when the installation of a remote control is not only not the best choice, but can also be dangerous. If you doubt the safety of using a remote control for a particular application, do not attempt it without consultation.

One Person, 40' Platform

At certain times a contractor may elect to staff a large platform with only one person. Financial reasons, illness or the amount of work that needs to be accomplished may motivate this. Although this is not illegal, it is not the best practice and can be dangerous.

Every seasoned operator of suspended scaffolding knows that you have to pay close attention to everything related to the platform while on board. When you travel up and down the building face you have to move your rope grab with you. You have to operate the hoist and make sure that it is performing correctly, and pay attention to the wire rope. You have to make sure that your power cord does not get hung up and snagged. You need to make sure that the platform or its roller bumpers do not hang up on the building face. You must maintain level travel for the platform so that any items on board do not shift and fall. At times you have to kick off the building face.

With all of this going on, adding in the responsibility of monitoring the operation of another hoist may not be the safest idea.

Although hoists are designed to run at the same speed when the same models are used at each end of the platform, some variations of speed are noticed. These variations are caused by slight differences in the efficiency of one hoist to another, one hoist being started before the other, or because the operator released the operating button for a split second to relax his hand. All of these conditions could create a platform that is slightly higher on one end versus the other.

Maintaining level travel on a suspended scaffold is very important at all times. Level travel is even more critical to platforms that use 3 or more hoists. If a platform uses 3 or more hoists and one of these hoists falls behind, it could become overloaded.

Special Training Required

The use of remote controls on a temporary platform requires special training for each operator that uses them. With the risks that have just been discussed, there are still potentially many more risks that could be associated with the use of remote controls.

Consider two persons on one platform. One operates both hoists on the platform, let's call the other person the worker. If the worker asks the operator to move his end of the platform up, just a little bit, a potential crushing hazard could be present if not done perfectly.

If the operator is running a 40' platform by himself and is standing at one end of the platform, when they get to the top of the building, the potential exists that he may run into the termination on the end of the wire rope. Running into the terminated end of any wire rope with a hoist can cause unseen damage to the wire rope and the fittings used to secure that rope. Rigging devices can sustain damage in this scenario as they might become overloaded. Hoists can also become damaged.

Operators must be trained to evaluate all of the potential risks that could occur when using remotes. There should be discussion about how some of these risks can be eliminated or minimized to the greatest extent that they can be.

Possible Remote Control Hazards:

- Platforms can become overloaded if level travel is not maintained.
- Crushing hazards can exist.
- If electrical problems occur, the possibility of runaway hoists can create a vertical platform and the risk of falling becomes present.
- There may be additional risks of electrocution if remote control cables are severed.
- Remotes can be become accidentally engaged if precautions are not taken.

In the permanent equipment side of our industry there are items that can help to minimize these risks.

Top limit switches are installed on permanent equipment to minimize the risk of running a hoist into an overhead obstruction, such as the termination on the wire rope. Auto-level and out-of-level devices are used on permanent equipment to maintain level travel. These devices and several others can be installed into temporary platforms as need be. Although OSHA may not require these items, providing them provides your customer that extra level of safety.

Did You Know?

- Power Climber can help you make decisions about the best way to approach difficult job site applications.

Tips and Tricks

- If you install a remote control onto a hoist, make sure that the strain relief fitting is not mounted on top of the hoist. This could cause water to enter the electrical compartment.

For questions or comments, contact Customer Service at 1-800-560-CLIMB (2546) or customerservice@safeworks.com.