



CMEIG Media Release

Lifting freely suspended loads will cost you more!

Australian Standards has released a public draft of a revised version of AS1418.8 and are seeking comments to the revised standard on lifting loads using special purpose appliances (DR 06392). The changes to the existing Standard on lifting freely suspended loads with earthmoving equipment may be summarised as:

- The attachment shall be removed from the quickhitch when lifting
- Do not lift from lugs welded to buckets
- A quickhitch shall have an independent latching device (ie safety pin)
- The existing 3 t limit for the mandatory application of controlled lowering devices (hose burst valves) has been removed

Why the changes?

The first three changes reflect best practices being set by industry practitioners however the new requirement for hose burst valves regardless of the lifting weight is an interesting shift in thinking. The installation of hose burst valves when lifting less than 3 tonnes (Table 5.5.2 of the current Standard) has been an optional requirement in Australia for many years.

Impact of the changes

As an example, a hydraulic excavator lifting a small pipe, say 80kg in mass, will need to have burst valves installed by the owner if this revised Standard is introduced.

The proposed changes will also have a significant impact in the construction of drainage works where a plumber is lifting light loads or where Council staff are using a backhoe loader for several functions.

Cost implications

Hose burst valves are not cheap! A recent study by CMEIG indicates that the cost of these valves as a percentage of the cost of a new machine will be in the range of 2% to 6%. Retrofitting may cost between \$10,000 and \$15,000. This may be a small price to pay for safety but there is no evidence that safety will be improved as statistics on burst valve failures are not collected.

Tax implications

The Australian Taxation Office will only allow you to write off plant before its tabled effective life is reached if there is substantial evidence of greater than normal usage of the equipment (ie 18 hour shift work). Owners of existing plant will therefore need to retrofit these valves on their fleet rather than write off equipment.

What impact will the valves have on performance?

On new machines, the factory fitted valves are unlikely to change the performance of the equipment. On existing plant, manufacturers will recommend specific valves that limit the change in performance, but the impact on the performance of equipment when using after market valves is unknown. At worst, the machine may overheat on a long shift if the wrong valve has been fitted.

What are the alternatives?

Hiring a crane for a one-off requirement to lift 100 kg on site is not feasible but neither is manual handling. It is well known that accidents involving weights greater than 100 kg can cause serious injuries or even death.

Many of the lifting incidents reported to CMEIG with hydraulic excavators have been attributed to the failure of lifting ropes and welded lifting lugs or operators failing to install the safety pin on quickhitches.

A recent safety incident in Brisbane with a quickhitch failing resulting in a worker having both legs broken, has once again highlighted what regulators and CMEIG members have been saying for some time about the dangers of quickhitches. This revised Standard and a new Standard under development on quickhitches will answer concerns by CMEIG members' about the need to improve the safety benchmark in relation to the use of quickhitches.

What to do?

CMEIG urges you to consider the implications to the proposed changes in the Standard on your own earthmoving fleet. If you cannot find the draft Standard on the Global SI web site, you can also download a copy at www.cmeig.com.au/engineering/dr06392.pdf

Getting the correct plant for the task is vital to minimising safety incidents on site. CMEIG members want all operators and workers to be safe and go home to their families after a good day's work!

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