

WHY DO I NEED A YELLOW CARD TO OPERATE AN ELEVATING WORK PLATFORM?

Introduction

Every State in Australia has in place an Occupational Health and Safety Act (OH&S) which aims to protect the health, safety and welfare of people at work. In these Acts, it is clearly stated that there is a duty of care to ensure workplace safety. It specifically states that:

- Employees must provide information, instruction, training and supervision necessary to ensure the health and safety of employees at work.
- Manufacturers and suppliers of plant must ensure equipment is safe to use when properly used and must make available adequate information about the conditions for the safe use of the equipment manufactured or supplied.
- Employees must co-operate with efforts to comply with OH & S requirements.

What this means, in reality, is that there needs to be some form of proof that a person has been instructed in the safe use of an EWP. Verbal instruction tends to be disregarded in a court of law, so the favoured solution is something in writing – hence the EWP Operator Ticket or Yellow Card.

How does it work?

The Operator Card is a registered ticket issued to operators who have been successfully instructed by EWPAAs authorised instructors in the safe use and operation of various types of EWP's. There are six different types of EWP's listed on the ticket, with those not applicable deleted by the instructor before issue.

The categories are:

- Trailermounted Boomlift
- Self Propelled Boomlift
- Self Propelled Knuckle Boom
- Vertical Lifts
- Scissor Lifts
- Truck Mounted Boom

Whilst these are all classed as EWP's, each one is very different in use and safe operation.

The EWPAAs Yellow Card is a national scheme recognised by all major manufacturers, suppliers and users of EWPs. The Yellow Card initiative meets the two key objectives of the OH&S Acts, being:

- It confirms that the operators of specific types of EWP's have been instructed in the safe use of the work platform.
- The supplier, employer and user all have documentary evidence that the required duty of care has been met or exceeded.

What are the alternatives?

The EWPAA Yellow Card is the Associations way of meeting the duty of care requirements. However, other methods can be used. Such methods include having in-house training schemes or user specific programs. The key elements are that all programs need to have is a structured training format or procedure plus written proof of successful completion by a suitably qualified person.

What if I do nothing?

The “do nothing” approach also works well until there is an accident or claim. Then there are major problems for all concerned as there is no proof that any attempt has been made to make the workplace safe.

Where does Work Cover 11m Boom License fit in?

To complicate matters WorkSafe Australia introduced Certificate in Competency licenses for users of Boom Lifts 11m and over through the National Occupational Health & Safety Certification Standards for Users and Operators of Industrial Equipment (NOHSC:1006(1995)). This is a national scheme in place throughout Australia. From an EWP point of view, it means that you must have a license to operate a boom 11m or more. It does not specify what type of boom and excludes scissor lifts. To obtain a license or Certificate of Competency, you are required to sit an exam with an accredited assessor. This is two-part test, knowledge and practical, and requires a good practical and safety knowledge of EWPs to avoid failure.

Do I need both a Yellow Card and WP License to work over 11m in a boom?

The straightforward answer is YES. Remember, the Yellow Card confirms you have been trained in the safe use and operation of specific types of boom lifts, thus meeting your duty of care. The WP license is a WorkCover requirement for working in booms 11m and over.

This can be confusing but an example may clarify the point.

Eg: You have just got your 11m boom license using a Trailerlift with a boom length of 11.2m. Next day you have to operate a 20m Self Propelled Knuckleboom. Both EWPs are over 11m but very different units. Your Yellow Card will indicate whether you have been trained for this type of unit – if not, you will need instruction before use.

In summary

The OH&S Acts are there to protect you in the workplace. Ensuring you have met the duty of care and license requirements will go a long way to achieving a safe working environment.

The EWPAA Operator Ticket (Yellow Cards) is an important step in the direction of proof of safety at work.

For further information on the EWPAA training programs please contact **Tim Hille** on **0419 153 143**.

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