

NATF Redacted Operating Experience Report

Bucket Truck Leveling Malfunction

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Topic

Bucket Truck Leveling Malfunction

Description

A contractor crew was framing a pole when a circuit deenergized. Work was underway, 100-feet aloft, using a rented bucket truck. This truck model is designed to automatically self-level. A lineman was in the bucket at the static location when the bucket began to tilt backward. The lineman stopped to make sure nothing was pushing the controls (e.g., tools, materials, etc.) and determined there was nothing touching the controls. The lineman started to boom down, and the bucket tilted even more.

The crew member experienced a mental lapse under stress and did not attempt to operate the emergency stop control. At that point, tools started falling out of the bucket, and the lineman grabbed onto the winch line and jib for something to hang on to. He was clipped but never got to the point of hanging from the harness. He yelled for assistance, and the apprentice ran to the lower set of controls where he tried to level the bucket. However, the bucket would not level. The apprentice then lowered the upper boom.

The bucket would not return to the stowed position. The lineman exited the bucket using a ladder to descend to the ground. It was determined that this truck was not part of any manufacturer recall. The rental company is investigating maintenance and inspection records and working with the manufacturer to determine the root cause of the mechanical failure. There were no injuries or equipment damage.

Lessons Learned

1. Always wear fall protection while in the bucket. Had this crew member lost their grip, the properly worn and secured fall protection would have prevented a tragic outcome.
2. Proper training on bucket rescue resulted in proper performance of the recovery task and prevented further issues or injuries with the apprentice's prompt rescue response.
3. Proper emergency response should be exercised in non-emergency situations to ensure that proper response becomes second nature. The lineman in the bucket was too startled in the heat of the moment to try the emergency stop control.

Corrective Actions

1. Share this information with all crews and contractors used within the company.
2. Further investigation will be conducted into the maintenance and inspection records. If needed, the team will consult with the manufacturer to determine the root cause and whether a recall is prudent.

Extent of Condition

This may apply to all bucket trucks with self-leveling functionality or may be limited to the specific models.

Attachments



View of bucket tilt.



Side view as left because it would not return to stowed position.



View from front toward rear, showing the jib line.



Bucket controls, with arrow pointing toward the emergency stop button.