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Victorian  
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Federation

# Telehandler Safety Handbook



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# Acknowledgements

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# Telehandlers, safety and you

This safety resource has been developed by the Victorian Farmers Federation, in conjunction with the Telescopic Handler Association (TSHA), to increase awareness for farmers of the machinery's operation and how to prevent accidents while in use.

A telehandler or Telescopic Handler is a versatile machine for agricultural work, but its advantages can pose serious risks if it's not used correctly.

Telehandlers typically have a side-mounted cab, with the boom mounted to the right of the cabin. The operator's view from the cab may be obstructed by the boom, cab pillars and other parts of the structure and visibility can also be restricted when reversing or lifting large loads.

If not operated correctly, the telehandler can tip over or contact power lines, and loads can slip off and attachments can come loose, all causing injuries and fatalities. Unfortunately, these incidents have been increasing and promoting safe practices are a priority.

This guidance will assist farmers in highlighting a range of considerations that combined serve to improve the 'state of knowledge' on Telehandler safety for the industry.



***Powerlines are a significant hazard***



## **Hazards**

Be aware of your surroundings when operating a Telehandler, assess the terrain, use attachments that are fit-for-purpose and ensure the equipment is well maintained.

### **Dangers to look out for:**

- overturning
- electrocution - overhead powerlines
- contact with workers, pedestrians and bystanders
- unsecured loads falling leading to crushing
- inappropriate or poorly maintained handling attachments
- unsafe procedures
- attachments inappropriately used as work platforms (e.g. standing on forks and pallets)
- attachments not secured properly
- unintended movement of the machine

# Training and Licences

Completing the right training for the equipment you are using is essential to get your task done safely and efficiently.

High Risk Work Licences are required for operators of Telehandlers with a load capacity over three tonnes. For Telehandlers with a load capacity under three tonnes, the TSHA Operator Gold Card training is strongly recommended.



Training	Specification	Provider
TSHA Trained Operator Gold Card	Telehandler capacity three tonnes or less for standard attachments where the machine is operated from the cabin.	<p><b>Telescopic Handler Association</b></p> <p>The TSHA provides training on the following attachments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Forks</li> <li>• Crane Jib</li> <li>• Earthmoving bucket</li> <li>• Other (for any other type of attachment such a bale grabs, work platforms, sweeper)</li> </ul> <p>The Gold Card will identify the modules you have completed and competency achieved.</p> <p>For more information go to:  <a href="https://tsha.com.au/gold-card">https://tsha.com.au/gold-card</a></p>
WorkSafe High Risk Crane (CN) licence	Telehandler capacity over three tonnes with standard attachments where the machine is operated from below.	<p><b>WorkSafe Victoria</b></p> <p>WorkSafe issues high risk work licences, including for the elevating work platform of a Telehandler.</p> <p>You will need to complete the necessary training through a registered training organisation and pass the assessment to lodge your licence application.</p> <p>The CN licence now includes a Dogging High Risk licence as a pre-requisite.</p> <p>For more information go to:  <a href="https://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/high-risk-work-licence">https://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/high-risk-work-licence</a></p>



# Safety Considerations When Using a Telehandler



- Travel with the boom lowered to make sure that the centre of gravity of the machine and the load is as low as possible to maximise stability.
- Ensure that loading yards are well maintained and that pot holes and soft patches created by adverse weather conditions are addressed in a timely manner.
- Carefully choose routes to avoid overhead power lines, very steep slopes or gradients and slippery or loose surfaces.
- When working near dams and waterways make sure the ground can support the machine. Avoid ground that is waterlogged or eroded. Use spreader plates when needed.
- Adopt the correct driving direction and travelling position for negotiating a slope or gradient, e.g. when a load is carried the load should face uphill and when no load is carried the fork arms should face downhill.
- Avoid turning on or traversing a slope or gradient and always descend straight down the gentlest gradient of a slope, instead of driving diagonally across it.
- Avoid stacking/de-stacking a load on a slope or gradient.
- Use the boom safety prop supplied by the manufacturer if any work has to be carried out under a raised boom.
- The operator should always look around and check for the presence of by-standers before moving off and while manoeuvring and travelling. Use barriers and exclusion zones to keep people and vehicles clear of the Telehandler.
- Ensure that boom lockouts are used when shifting loads.
- When lifting a suspended load by hook or jib, move the boom slowly to avoid swinging the load. If it starts swinging, then reduce boom movement until it stops. Never use chains or slings slung over the forks or boom carriage.
- Only use a work platform that is directly fixed to the Telehandler, not on forks, and has been approved by the Telehandler manufacturer.
- Don't deploy or reset the outriggers while the boom is elevated with a load as this can cause major instability.



# Attachments

A wide range of attachments are available for agricultural work such as pallet or muck forks, buckets, bale spikes, block cutters and grabs.

## Key points to remember:

- Operators require training for the attachments used
- Fitting an attachment may alter the characteristics of the machine and should be considered when determining revised lifting capacities (a process known as de-rating)
- Always select attachments compatible with the telehandler and are suitable for the task to be performed
- Attachments need to be regularly inspected and properly maintained
- Always operate isolation switches, hydraulic valves or other measures provided on the machine to secure and/or isolate attachments safely

# Risk Assessment Checklist Before Using a Telehandler

- Operator has up-to-date training
- Task is suitable for the Telehandler
- Check for hazards such as power lines, other vehicles or machinery has been completed
- Attachment is compatible to the Telehandler
- Attachment has been well maintained
- Visibility is clear
- Mirrors are in good condition and properly adjusted
- Cab windows are clean and intact
- Telehandler maintenance is up-to-date as per manufacturer's instructions
- Telehandler manufacturer pre-checks completed
- Overload indicator is working
- Transport Lock-out switch is operable
- A fitted lap belt or similar restraint is used
- Bystander (e.g. other workers/pedestrians) are clear of Telehandler operations
- A walk of the route and workplace have been done to check that the ground can support the Telehandler and load



**Staying up-to-date with Telehandler best practices and machinery improvements will help you to maximise your productivity and safety.**

## **Victorian Farmers Federation**

For additional resources, advice and support about Telehandlers or OH&S rights and responsibilities for farming communities, contact the VFF.

We can also help with these free services:

- Assist you to write a Farm Safety Plan
- Organise a Farm Safety Walk with a trained Safety Officer to put workplace theory into practice
- Provide a review of your Farm Safety Management System with tailored recommendations for improvements

**For more information:**  
<https://www.vff.org.au> or  
Ph: 1300 882 833

## **Telescopic Handlers Association**

The TSHA has created a 'Good Practice Guide' to assist employers with guidance on the safe use of Telehandlers in workplaces covering training, operation and maintenance.

**For more information:**  
<https://tsha.com.au> or Ph: 1800 015 166

## **WorkSafe Victoria**

For advice and support on health and safety laws and regulations, contact WorkSafe Victoria.

**For more information:**  
<https://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au> or  
Ph: 1800 136 089



**JCB**

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