

INFORMATION SHEET

Using earthmoving machinery as a crane to suspend a load

Earthmoving machinery, such as excavators, can be fitted with lifting equipment and used to suspend a load, somewhat like a crane.

From 10 August 2025, the work health and safety regulations will require a high risk work licence (HRWL) be held to operate earthmoving machinery as a crane (i.e. to suspend a load) where the machinery has a safe working load (SWL) exceeding 3 tonnes.

In this context, the SWL is taken to be the maximum mass the machine is rated to lift, in its strongest configuration.

In addition to holding a HRWL, operators of earthmoving machinery must be competent for the tasks they are required to conduct and have suitable training and experience.

Licensing requirements

Machinery operators will need to hold either a:

- CN HRWL to use a non-slewing mobile crane with a SWL exceeding 3 tonnes, or
- C2 HRWL to use a slewing mobile crane with a SWL exceeding 3 tonnes.

The requirements apply under the Work Health and Safety (General) Regulations 2022 and the Work Health and Safety (Mines) Regulations 2022.

Other options for operator training

Machinery operators are exempt from having to hold the C2 HRWL if they:

- hold a Dogging (DG) HRWL
- have been deemed competent in the training unit, *SLELIC301 Conduct Safe Lifting with Excavators*, and
- can produce either a paper or electronic copy of their Statement of Attainment for the SLELIC301 course when using slewing earthmoving machinery as a crane.

When it's appropriate to use earthmoving machinery to suspend a load

A thorough risk assessment shall be done before using earthmoving machinery such as an excavator to lift or suspend loads. This helps identify, as far as reasonably practicable, potential hazards with the work. This should be conducted in consultation with workers.

If the risk assessment suggests that earthmoving machinery is not appropriate for the specific lifting task, other types of lifting equipment should be used instead.

If earthmoving machinery is the most suitable way to reduce the risks associated with performing the task, then it is important to identify the most appropriate equipment to carry out the work safely, and to implement appropriate risk controls and safe systems of work.

Earthmoving machinery shall only be used as a crane if:

- it has been designed to be used as a crane
- limitations provided by the manufacturer in the use of the equipment as a crane have been adhered to
- it has been inspected and maintained in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations
- the equipment has been designed and manufactured to applicable standards and
- the lifting attachments are appropriate for the load, are inspected and deemed safe to use.

Guidance on special requirements for earthmoving equipment used as a crane can be found in Australian Standard AS 1418.8. However, where the primary use of the plant is for craneage work, the relevant requirements of AS 1418.5 and AS 1418.8 are considered reasonably practicable.

Australian Standard AS 13031 provides guidance regarding lifting eyes, including lifting eyes that incorporate a latching mechanism.

Safe work method statements required to use earthmoving machinery as a crane

The use of earthmoving machinery as a crane on a construction site is classed as high-risk construction work. This means you must complete a safe work method statement (SWMS) before starting work. A SWMS must:

- state the hazards and risks of the work
- sufficiently describe measures to control those risks and
- describe how the risk control measures are to be implemented.

The types of hazards and risks that should be identified, controlled and documented in the SWMS include:

- assessing the load
- selection and inspection of lifting equipment
- application of lifting techniques
- selection of plant to lift the load including consideration of:
 - rated lift capacity
 - lifting point radius
- ground conditions
- path of travel if load is being picked and carried

- exclusion zones separating people and other plant from the lifting zone
- placing and alignment of lifted parts with other components
- operator and offside training and licensing requirements, including whether the person slinging the load requires a dogging HRWL.

The SWMS must be readily accessible and easy to understand by any persons doing or involved in the work.

How WorkSafe will enforce the new requirements

WorkSafe will generally take an educational approach to the new requirements until 10 December 2025. However if safety issues are noted, such as a dangerous incident, WorkSafe will follow its standard Compliance and Enforcement Policy.

Further information

You may wish to review the following additional information about the licensing requirement changes:

- [Statement of regulatory intent](#)
- [Granting of exemption from requirement\(s\) of the Work Health and Safety \(General\) Regulations 2022](#) – Regulation 81 – Licence required to carry out high risk work – Earthmoving machinery
- [Granting of exemption from requirement\(s\) of the Work Health and Safety \(Mines\) Regulations 2022](#) – Regulation 81 – Licence required to carry out high risk work – Earthmoving machinery