



Significant Incident Summary No. 15

Mobile lighting tower – Uncontrolled movement of mast

Date: 23 October 2026

Background

WorkSafe is investigating an incident involving a mobile lighting tower in which the telescopic mast retracted in an uncontrolled manner and a worker was seriously injured. Information contained in this significant incident summary is based on evidence available at the time of writing.

Mobile lighting towers are widely used across industries including mining, construction, public events, emergency response, road works and traffic management. These towers, which can be telescopic with a retractable mast, are used to light areas where permanent installations are not required.

Mobile lighting towers with a telescopic mast may move or descend unexpectedly if the lighting assembly is offset or unevenly balanced. The risk of uncontrolled movement may be increased by inadequate positioning or deployment of the base assembly stabilisers.

Hazards and risks

An uncontrolled telescopic mast retraction presents a significant falling object hazard, exposing workers to the risk of serious injury or death.

Other hazards may include:

- crush or entanglement
- electric shock
- fire or explosion
- exposure to high-pressure fluids.

Recommendations and actions required

WorkSafe encourages all workplaces using mobile lighting towers with telescopic masts to review their risk assessments and control measures, to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, a work environment without risks to worker health or safety.

Where new hazards are identified, appropriate control measures must be implemented in accordance with the hierarchy of control. To minimise the risk of incidents when working with mobile lighting towers with telescopic masts:

- conduct pre-operational inspections in accordance with manufacturer instructions and checklists
- ensure workers are trained and competent in the safe setup, operation and use of mobile lighting towers

- position mobile lighting towers on level, stable ground, and away from power lines
- fully deploy stabilisers before raising the mast
- ensure the lighting assembly is correctly positioned in accordance with manufacturer instructions
- inspect and maintain all ancillary plant, like lighting towers, in accordance with manufacturer or competent person recommendations.

Designers, manufacturers and suppliers

Designers, manufacturers and suppliers must ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that mobile lighting towers are without risks to worker health and safety.

Control measures may include:

- automated mast extension and retraction
- operator controls located outside the footprint of the equipment installed on the mast
- emergency descent braking systems that automatically activate if the mast exceeds safe limits
- secondary locking mechanisms to prevent uncontrolled mast movement
- audible alarms that operate during mast raising and lowering
- if hydraulic systems are fitted, appropriate valves to prevent sudden or uncontrolled mast movement
- guarding of parts of the plant that could crush parts of the body
- inspect hydraulic component mounting systems for lubrication and operation and ensure pivot pins are not seized
- design all equipment at the top of the mast to be balanced in all directions.

Further actions

Where control measures introduce changes to work practices, duty holders must:

- consult with workers
- update safe work procedures
- provide appropriate training, instruction, information and supervision.

When not in use, mobile lighting towers should be stored in a manner that does not create a risk to workers or others in the workplace.

References and further information

Work Health and Safety Commission

- [Managing risks of plant in the workplace](#): Code of practice

Mining and Petroleum Advisory Committee

- [Mine safety management system](#): Code of Practice