“The Top 10 Mistakes When Rigging A Heavy Load - Which Can Damage What You’re Trying To Lift, Cause Injury, Or Even Death”

By John Raulerson

Rigging and lifting heavy loads carries the risk of costly damage and injury.

Hauling a mere couple hundred pounds requires some forethought and might get you hurt if a mistake is made.

Lifting thousands of pounds can get you or others killed.

You MUST have professional experience, as well as the safety record that goes with it, if you’re going to attempt lifting and transporting heavy loads. Just having the right equipment isn’t enough - after all, you can’t be a surgeon just because you own some knives.

That said, when it comes to contracting with an outside company to do the rigging and lifting for you, use this checklist of common mistakes to make sure the outfit is up to your standards:

1. The Number One mistake is the worst of all: Not having the proper training in rigging and handling a heavy load. If you don’t know how to do it, you multiply your chances of something going wrong - it’s as simple as that.

2. Sling & Hardware Selection

Every load has different rigging and safety requirements. And different kinds of hardware have different capacities for weight and size.

You also must know which kinds of slings and hardware work together with the proper end attachments.

And you must also be aware of the proper safety equipment any worker uses while rigging and transporting the heavy load.
Not selecting and using the proper slings and hardware is like trying to put the wrong-sized tires on a truck and expecting a smooth drive. At the very least, you will damage your vehicle - or cause a serious accident.

3. Not Following The Proper Inspection & Removal Criteria

For any rigging job, you must visually inspect every step of the process and keep properly dated records of the conditions. You must also know the prevailing OSHA & ANSI regulations.

4. Capacity Tag Identification Mistakes

These include not knowing how to read them and not reporting loss.

5. Not Handling And Taking Care Of Your Equipment Properly

After using any equipment involved in rigging, you must store it properly, but first check for damage and red tag if necessary.

If the company you’re working with fails to do this, problems develop that might not be noticed im mediately, but could cause damage or a serious accident the next time the equipment is put to use…which could be for your job.

6. Not Cleaning & Lubricating The Sling

After using the sling, all the dirt and debris must be cleaned off. Failure to do so will result in rust and the equipment will corrode. The rigging must also have the proper lubricant to ensure its proper performance and lifespan.

7. Making Mistakes With Load Weights

Before anyone can even set up the rigging for your job, the load weight itself must be measured properly. Otherwise the right equipment for the job comes down to guesswork - or whatever the company happens to have available.
8. Not Using The Proper Hitch Types

To safely transport any heavy load, the proper hitch must be used for the job. The load and the sling must be protected during the transportation and lifting. To do this, you must know the lifting height, overhead clearance and hook travel.

9. Not Using The Proper Lifting Device

The three crucial elements of the right lifting device are the height (is it high enough for the job), an adequate overhead reach, and a great enough capacity for the load it’s lifting.

10. Not Operating Properly

Finally, even if you get all of the above correct…the load still must be lifted and transported properly! And that includes doing so in a timely manner.

It is very difficult to find an experienced rigger in this business, especially here in South Florida. There are a few who pretend to be, and it’s easy to be fooled when it comes to their lack of professional training - which can remain hidden until they’re already working on your heavy load.

Most of the guys I know, especially the older ones, will tell me “this is the way I have been doing it for 30 years” when talking about their outdated methods. They have not been trained in accordance with the more modern, up-to-date rigging and material technologies. The younger guys and gals depend entirely on the computer for all their answers. Sometimes this works…most of the time it doesn’t.

Consolidated Rigging & Lifting Products, Inc. has been in business for FAR more than 30 years, but we still keep up with the best modern equipment. These days we’re so confident in our services, we’ll come to your job site free of charge for an inspection and evaluation. No matter what your questions are, we can answer them if you give us a call at 800-521-WIRE (9473).