We use aerial lifts quite often within Hemlock Semiconductor. In fact, we get so used to seeing them that it becomes easy to overlook how dangerous they can be.

Pinch points, property damage, crushing, tipping-over ... these are just a few of the hazards that can be associated with equipment of this type. Let’s look at an infamous incident involving one of these lifts.

It was just a couple months ago, October 28, 2010 to be exact, when a young man was killed while using a scissor lift. This was a pretty high profile event because it happened in a place you would not expect.

A young man named Declan Sullivan, a 20 year-old Junior, was filming football practice at the University of Notre Dame when a gust of wind tipped the scissor lift he was using. He died at the hospital later that day because of the injuries from the fall.

This is a real story, of a real person, who was just doing his job. He thought that he would be alright because he felt no one would ask him to do something that could get him killed. Unfortunately, he was dead wrong.

In another case, on the other side of the world, a worker was killed and another was badly injured when they drove their aerial lift over an underground “soak well”.

The two men, working at a concrete batch plant in Australia, were cleaning and painting silos when they decided to move the lift to a slightly different location. As they drove across the grass with the boom extended and elevated, one of the wheels suddenly sunk into the ground. This turned the boom into a catapult. Because one of the workers was not tied-off, the result of this incident was death for one person and a traumatic event with serious injury for the other.

Again, the workers felt like they were doing the job safely. Again, they were very wrong.

Please take the time to look at the job you are being asked to do. Is it safe? Are you, or someone you know, being asked to do something that is putting you or someone else in danger? If so, take a moment to find a safer way to do the job.

Remember the old saying, “An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure”. A few moments used to prevent an accident could save you from a lifetime of pain and regret.