

Work Safe Bulletin

Single Trowels on Suspended Slabs

The Cement Finishing Labour Relations Association is an Ontario not-for-profit ICI employer organization whose purpose includes the promotion of safe work planning and practices.

The purpose of this document is to provide specific hazard information and promote discussion of safe work practices.

This bulletin does not contain a full analysis of the law, nor does it constitute a legal opinion. The CFLRA is not liable for any damages resulting from the use of this information.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us at 289-837-1627 or by e-mail at safety@cflra.ca

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Background:

The operation of single float/trowel machines is common in suspended slab construction to obtain a smooth and dense surface finish.

Hazard Concerns:

Guardrails may not be strong enough to stop the travel of this equipment when in full motion. Slab protrusions may catch the trowel or float edge and cause the machine to kick-back suddenly.

Considerations:

Each project has unique characteristics that require careful consideration. It is strongly recommended that this issue be discussed at the preconstruction meeting with your safety representative. To reduce the possibility of an incident, it is recommended that the following be considered:

1. Follow the equipment manufacturer's operating instructions at all times.
2. Only trained concrete finishers should operate a single trowel finishing machines.
3. The finishing machine should not be operated without the protective outer bump ring attached.
4. The emergency stop control, or "dead-man" switch should be checked prior to its operation every day (the machine should stop quickly when the switch is activated).
5. The operator should pay careful attention to avoid hitting any protrusions from the concrete and shall finish around these areas by hand. The placing crew should assist in identifying potential hazards.
6. When finishing near a slab edge or opening, operators should not position themselves between the machine and the slab edge or opening.
7. The operator should not walk backwards towards a slab edge or a slab opening at any time.
8. The operator should not be tied to, or restrained by, the equipment at any time.
9. Trowel machines should not be operated within the handle radius of another worker.

Further references:

- [Occupation Health and Safety Act](#)
- [Ontario Regulation for Construction Projects](#)
- Equipment manufacturers operation / instruction manual.

