Orchard Tech
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Telehandler operation on an almond farm

What to expect before you start

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This sheet describes typical telehandler operation work and conditions. Your actual duties depend on the farm and what you are trained and authorised to do. Reading this sheet does not authorise you to drive a farm vehicle, operate machinery or repair equipment.

Who you work for

Orchard Tech is your employer. Your host farm (your host) directs your daily work. Both are responsible for your health and safety. Raise questions or safety concerns with your supervisor or Orchard Tech: Hari Yellina, 0439 32 32 32, or Soana Fanua, 0400 174 471.

Your working hours

Your confirmed roster sets your days, hours and breaks. Ask your supervisor if you are unsure.

The work you may do

Telehandler operation. A telehandler is a machine with a long arm, called a boom, that can reach up and out. An attachment, such as a bucket, fits on the end of the boom. You may use a telehandler to lift, carry, place and load materials in harvest, re-harvest or other farm work. Your host will tell you what to move, where to take it and which attachment to use.

Only if you are trained, assessed and authorised. Operate a telehandler only if your host has trained and assessed you on that machine and authorised you to operate it. Your host will confirm whether the work needs a licence. You must hold any licence the work requires. A licence alone does not show you can operate the machine safely.

This sheet covers operating the telehandler only. Repairs and maintenance, jump-starting a flat battery, operating other machines, using power tools, handling chemicals, electrical work, working at heights and entering dams, tanks, channels or confined spaces are separate tasks. They need their own instructions, training and authorisation.

Before you start

- **Pre-start checks:** before each shift, do the pre-start checks your host trained you in, using your host's checklist. These may include the controls, the radio and the attachment. Never use an unsafe machine.
- **Faults:** report any fault, damage or oil leak to your supervisor straight away. Do not touch a leaking hose.
- **Flat battery:** if the machine will not start, tell your supervisor. Jump-starting is a separate task. If you see a cracked or leaking battery, or notice an unusual smell near it, keep away and tell your supervisor.
- **Starting up:** adjust your seat. Tell other workers to move away. Check that the boom is fully lowered and pulled in.

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Lifting and carrying loads

A telehandler can tip over, and loads can slip or fall. Your host will train you to check each load before you lift it.

- **Load chart:** your host will show you the load chart for the machine and the attachment you use. It shows how much the machine can lift safely at each boom length and angle. A load that is safe close to the machine may not be safe further out or higher up. Check the chart before each lift, as your host trained you. Never lift more than the chart allows.
- **Keep loads low:** pull the boom in and carry the load low and close to the machine. Move the controls smoothly and gently. Avoid sudden movements.
- **Ground:** soft ground, slopes, holes and banks make tipping more likely. Lift and park on firm, even ground.
- **Attachments:** use only attachments that are approved for that machine by its maker and provided by your host. Check that the attachment is fitted correctly and rated for the load, as your host shows you. Do not carry anything on an attachment that is not made for carrying loads. Secure loads as your host shows you.
- **Lifting people is not part of this work.** Never let anyone ride in a bucket. Lifting people is a separate task. It is allowed only when the machine and attachment are designed and approved for lifting people, your host authorises it, and you have the required training.

People, power lines and blind spots

- **Keep people clear:** before you lift or move, check that everyone is well clear. Never let anyone stand or walk under a raised boom or load. If someone comes close, stop and wait until they are clear. Your host may fence off the work area.
- **Blind spots:** the boom, the load and the cab frame can block your view, especially when you reverse. Keep the windows clean. If you cannot see that the way is clear, stop and ask for help.
- **Power lines and structures:** a raised boom can hit overhead power lines and other structures. Electricity can also jump to a boom that comes close to a line, even if it does not touch. Before you start, your host will show you where the power lines are and the areas where the machine, boom, attachment and load must not go. Look up before you raise the boom. If you are not sure, stop and ask your supervisor.
- **If the machine touches a power line,** or you think electricity has jumped to it, stay in the cab unless there is a fire or another danger to your life. Warn others to keep away and not to touch the machine. Call 000. Wait until the power company says it is safe to leave. Your host will teach you the emergency procedure before you start.
- **Be seen:** wear the high-visibility clothing your host provides at all times. When you are out of the cab, never approach a working machine until the operator has stopped and clearly signalled you to come closer. Eye contact alone is not enough.

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Moving around the farm safely

Driving the telehandler

- **Public roads:** never drive on or across a public road unless your host has confirmed that the machine, your licence and the route are approved.
- **Seat belt, doors and windows:** wear your seat belt at all times. Shut the doors and windows before the machine moves. Use the flashing light or headlights as your host tells you. If the machine starts to tip, stay in the cab and hold on. Do not try to jump out.
- **Passengers:** do not carry another person on a machine made for one person.
- **Travel:** keep the boom lowered and pulled in, with the load or bucket low. Drive at a safe speed for the ground, the load and the people around you.
- **Leaving the machine:** whenever you leave it, park it with the attachment on the ground, the handbrake on and the engine off. Your host will show you how to shut down and secure it. At the end of the shift or task, park where your host tells you, on firm, even ground. Check the machine over and report any problems. Return the key the way your host shows you.

Farm traffic rules

- **Follow the farm traffic plan:** use the main tracks and set routes, obey signs and speed limits, and slow down for turns, loads, people, dust, poor visibility and rough ground. Keep away from steep slopes, banks and water.
- **Headlands and crossings:** headlands are the turning areas at the ends of the rows. Slow down, look both ways and give way as instructed. Watch for tractors, harvesters, trucks, people and vehicles coming out of rows.

Weather and the outdoors

Most work is outdoors in heat, cold, wind, rain and dust. Watch for holes, pipes, slippery ground and snakes. Work may change or stop in heat, storms or smoke: follow your host's instructions. Use sun protection all year (broad-brim hat, long sleeves, sunglasses, sunscreen), drink water often, take shade breaks and dress for the weather. Tell your supervisor straight away if you or a co-worker feel sick, dizzy or very hot.

- **Do not enter a block that is being sprayed or has a no-entry sign. Do not drink irrigation water:** it may contain fertiliser or chemicals.
- **Dust:** follow your host's instructions for dust. If dust makes it hard to see clearly or to breathe, stop the machine in a safe place and tell your supervisor.

Sitting and getting on and off

You may sit in the cab for long periods, and rough ground can jolt and shake you. Use the steps and handholds to get on and off. Do not jump down. Keep away from moving parts and hot engine parts. Use your breaks. Tell your supervisor early if you feel pain, discomfort or unusual tiredness.

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PPE and help on the farm

Your host will provide the personal protective equipment (PPE) for your tasks and show you how to wear, check and look after it. This may include safety boots, high-visibility clothing, gloves, eye or hearing protection, long sleeves and long trousers, and sun protection. Report missing, damaged or poorly fitting PPE before you start. PPE does not replace training, instructions or other safety controls.

At induction, learn who your supervisor is, where water, toilets and first aid are, the emergency plan, how to get help where there is no phone coverage, and the check-in arrangements when you work alone.

- In a life-threatening emergency, call Triple Zero (000), then tell your supervisor. If you see a snake, keep clear and never try to catch or kill it. If a snake bites you, or you think you have been bitten, keep as still as possible and call 000 or ask someone to call.
- Report every injury, near miss or unsafe situation to your supervisor and Orchard Tech as soon as possible, even if it seems small.
- Ask for a demonstration, an explanation or language help whenever you do not understand.

Important note before starting any job

This sheet describes typical telehandler operation work. Before you start, your host will give you the job description and safe work instructions for your actual duties, the PPE you need, a farm induction and training for your tasks. Follow those instructions. Do not do any work without the required PPE, training and authorisation. Complete the induction at every new farm, and get the instructions and training for every new task. **If anything is missing, unsafe or unclear, stop and ask your supervisor. You can also contact Orchard Tech.**