



Working at Height Mobile Elevating Working Platforms

Audience: Site Operatives, Customer Care Operatives

Presenter: GHSEA, Site Manager, Trade Supervisors



Mobile Elevating Working Platforms (MEWP)

A MEWP can be used to carry out work at height for various tasks, particularly out of sequence operations when scaffold may have been dismantled and/or it is not possible or “reasonably practicable” to re-erect. Customer care and inspection teams may also use MEWP’s regularly for access and remedial work activities.



Training, Competence and Equipment

When a MEWP is required, it should be hired with a trained operator who holds an International Powered Access Federation (IPAF) qualification. The work requirements should be discussed with the supplier who can advise on the type and size of machine.

When the MEWP is hired it should also come with the necessary amount of harnesses for the operator and workers that will be in the basket.

Any site operative (employed or sub-contract) required to operate a MEWP must be competent to operate and must hold the correct qualification and a risk assessment must be completed.

It is always advisable that a short awareness briefing is carried out to ensure all operatives know how to work with the MEWP safely, especially in an emergency.



MEWP Hazards

Entrapment

Operator trapped between part of the basket and a fixed structure, e.g. when manoeuvring in confined areas with overhead obstructions.

Overturning

The machine may overturn throwing the operator from the basket

Falling

An operator may fall from the basket during work activities

Collision

The vehicle may collide with pedestrians, overhead cables or nearby vehicles.

These hazards must be identified within a risk assessment and suitable control measures put in place.



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Controlling the risk

It is important to select the right MEWP for the job and site.

Also, there must be a plan for rescuing someone from a MEWP which has been practiced before the MEWP is used

Someone on the ground must know what to do in an emergency and how to operate the machine's ground controls.

There are a number of precautions that can reduce the risk from MEWP hazards. These are:

Confined overhead working

Brief operators on the dangers, and the safe system of work to be followed.

If there are overhead structures against which an operator could be trapped and then pushed onto the MEWP controls, consider selecting a MEWP that has been designed to prevent such accidental contact. MEWPs with shrouded or otherwise protected controls are available.

Keeping the platform tidy will reduce the risk of the operator tripping or losing balance while in the basket.

Ground conditions

The platform should be used on firm and level ground. Any temporary covers should be strong enough to withstand the applied pressure. Localised ground features, e.g. trenches, manholes and un-compacted backfill, can all lead to overturning.

Outriggers

Outriggers must be extended and chocked before raising the platform. Spreader plates may be necessary, check the equipment manual.

Guardrails

Make sure the work platform is fitted with effective guard rails and toe boards.

Arresting falls

If there is still a risk of people falling from the platform a harness with a short work restraint lanyard must be secured to a suitable manufacturer provided anchorage point within the basket to stop the wearer from getting into a position where they could fall from the carrier. Harnesses should not be worn if working over water.

Falling objects and collision with vehicles & pedestrians

Barrier off the area around the platform so that falling tools or objects do not strike people below and protect the MEWP from vehicle collision. A banksman may be required.



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Controlling the risk continued

Weather

High winds can tilt platforms and make them unstable, set a maximum safe wind speed for operation. Storms and snowfall can also damage platforms. Inspect the platform before use and after severe weather.

Handling materials

If used to install or remove materials check the weight and dimensions of materials and consider any manual handling and load distribution issues. You may need additional lifting equipment to transport materials to the work position. Unless adapted, MEWPs are not cranes!

Do not exceed the SWL of the MEWP.

Nearby hazards

Do not operate a MEWP close to overhead cables or other dangerous machinery, or allow any part of the arm to protrude into a traffic route.



Inspection, maintenance and examination

A MEWP must be supplied with a Thorough Examination Certificate which is dated within the last six months. This requirement also applies to MEWP's owned by operating businesses.

A programme of daily visual checks, regular inspections and servicing schedules should be established in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions and the risks associated with each MEWP.

Any defects or problems must be reported and MEWP not used until the problems have been rectified.