

Mobile elevating work platforms (MEWPs)

What you need to do

The most significant MEWP dangers arise from operation and use of the machine rather than from their movement as a site vehicle. The [law](#) says that these hazards must be properly controlled.

However, a safe workplace for all vehicle operations needs to be established by separating pedestrians and vehicles and providing hazard-free traffic routes.

Key issues are:

- [MEWP hazards](#)
- [Controlling the risk](#)
- [Training and competence](#)
- [Inspection, maintenance and examination](#)

What you need to know

Operators have died when trapped in the MEWP basket or when the machine has overturned. Great care must be taken to select the most appropriate MEWP and ensure that use of the machine is properly planned and managed. Operator instruction and training are very important requirements.

MEWP hazards

Most fatal and serious injuries involving MEWPs arise from:

- **Entrapment:** operator trapped between part of the basket and a fixed structure, eg when manoeuvring in confined overhead areas of steelwork. Operators may become trapped against the platform controls, and if this happens they may not be able to stop the machine running.
- **Overtuning:** the machine may overturn throwing the operator from the basket;
- **Falling:** an operator may fall from the basket during work activities; and
- **Collision:** the vehicle may collide with pedestrians, overhead cables or nearby vehicles.

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

Controlling the risk

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

Have a plan for rescuing someone from a MEWP and practise it – someone on the ground should 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, eg trenches, manholes and uncompacted 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.
- **Falling objects:** barrier off the area around the platform so that falling tools or objects do not strike people below.
- **Weather:** high winds can tilt platforms and make them unstable. Set a maximum safe wind speed for operation. Storms and snowfalls can also damage platforms. Inspect the platform before use after severe weather.
- **Handling materials:** if used to install 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.
- **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.

Training and competence

MEWP operators should have attended a recognised operator training course and received a certificate, card or 'licence', listing the categories of MEWP the bearer is trained to operate.

The expiry date of the training licence or card should be checked.

In addition to formal training for the type of MEWP, operators should have familiarisation training on the controls and operation of the specific make and model of MEWP they are using.

Inspection, maintenance and examination

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.

Operators should be encouraged to report defects or problems. Reported problems should be put right quickly and the MEWP taken out of service if the item is safety critical.

The MEWP must be thoroughly examined at least every six months by a competent person or in accordance with an examination scheme drawn up by such a competent person