

## TOOLBOX TALKS

# UNDERSTANDING A MOBILE ELEVATING WORK PLATFORM (MEWP) RESCUE PLAN



### WHEN IS A RESCUE PLAN NEEDED?

It is essential that all work at height is properly planned and carried out in a safe and efficient manner and that includes being prepared for emergencies. Any planning for work at height in a MEWP should include a rescue plan. Calling the emergency services is not an acceptable rescue plan.

### WHY DO YOU NEED A RESCUE PLAN?

The primary consideration for all MEWP operations is the safe return to ground level of the occupants inside the platform. However, unexpected events may mean the platform and occupants are prevented from lowering the platform to the ground for incidents such as:

- Lack of training or familiarisation with operating or safety systems
- Operator/occupant injury / unconsciousness
- Snagged platform / basket trapped
- Platform overload / tilt alarm system activation
- Mechanical malfunction

If a situation occurred where the platform could not be lowered by the operator from the platform using the normal controls there needs to be a clear plan in place to overcome the situation and bring the platform and occupants safely to the ground in a timely manner. It is too late to start thinking of what to do after a situation has occurred and there isn't anyone able to assist, or when people may be injured or panicking and are unable to make rational decisions. Accident reports have identified incidents where there was no-one on the ground that knew or was able to lower an injured operator in the platform who was in need of urgent medical attention.

### WHAT FACTORS NEED TO BE TAKEN INTO CONSIDERATION?

A rescue plan will identify a number of options that should be considered in a logical order depending on the seriousness of the situation that has arisen. Normal and auxiliary control systems built into a MEWP will allow the operator or a person using the ground controls to bring the platform safely to ground. Instructions on how these operate will be included in the MEWP operator manual. The platform or ground controls should be the first option to lowering the work platform. It is extremely unusual not to be able to lower the platform safely using these controls or for all of these systems to fail.

It is important to understand that if an emergency situation should arise consideration should first be given to using the 'normal controls' before attempting to use auxiliary controls, which may induce slower platform movement and impede the speed of any rescue.

Consideration should be given to identifying qualified persons for each of the different stages of the planning and rescue procedure.

Communication is another key factor to be considered. It is vital that everyone involved in the rescue plan is aware of their responsibilities and involvement for each stage of the planning and execution of the rescue plan.

**WORKING ALONE:** It is important to assess risks to lone workers and take steps to avoid or control risks where necessary. Working alone is not in itself prohibited and it may often be safe to do so. Employers have a duty to assess risks to lone workers and take steps to avoid or control risks where necessary. This may include briefing a nominated person who remains at ground level or working close by, to be able to lower the platform using the ground / auxiliary lower controls where necessary.

**CAUTION:** Ground controls / auxiliary lowering controls must always be accessible. This will require consideration when positioning the MEWP prior to elevating.

#### USEFUL REFERENCES:

- ANSI A92 standards for the lift in use
- OSHA CFR 1926.502 fall protection regulations
- IPAF Guidance on the Assessment of Ground Conditions
- IPAF F1/08/07 Familiarisation
- IPAF H1/08/12 Fall protection in mobile elevating work platforms
- Manufacturer Operators Manual

## HOW TO PLAN YOUR RESCUE

- Ensure all MEWP operators are trained and fully familiarised with the MEWP (including use of auxiliary controls) and the work to be performed
- Communicate the risk assessment and safe method of work
- Familiarise qualified persons on the ground or working near the individual MEWP with the ground controls and allow them to practice lowering the raised platform

- Identify a qualified person who can risk assess the situation should an emergency arise to identify:
  - Possible causes of why the situation has arisen
  - If persons in the platform need medical attention – if so how urgent are their needs
  - Are all occupants in the raised platform secure where they are
  - Are there any reasons why the occupants should be lowered as a matter of urgency – e.g. excessive winds, lightning storm

Once the situation has been assessed an appropriate action plan can be implemented to recover the situation.

## EXAMPLE RESCUE PLAN

The emergency services should be called immediately if it is identified that someone may be injured, however this should be done at the same time as continuing the rescue plan not instead of.

	EMERGENCY SITUATION	PROPOSED ACTION
<b>STEP 1</b>	Failure of upper control functions while elevated	Where the normal upper control functions fail; the operator will use the upper auxiliary controls to lower the platform safely
<b>STEP 2</b>	Failure of the operator to be able to operate the MEWP functions while elevated due to one of the following reasons:  <b>A.</b> Operator incapacitated <b>B.</b> Both normal and auxiliary functions fail to operate from upper control station	Where the operator is incapable of lowering the raised platform using the upper controls; an appointed person familiarised in the use of the ground controls will lower the platform safely using the normal ground controls
<b>STEP 3</b>	Failure of normal ground controls	Where the normal ground controls fail; an appointed person familiarised in the use of the ground controls will use the ground auxiliary controls to safely lower the platform
<b>STEP 4</b>	Failure of ALL normal and auxiliary lowering functions	Where all normal and auxiliary functions have failed a qualified person, and a service technician should be contacted.
		<p><b>Name:</b> _____ <b>Contact details:</b> _____</p> <p>List the names of qualified ground person(s) on site, familiarised and authorised to lower the work platform in the event of an emergency or a machine malfunction</p>

## CONSIDERATION FOR MID-AIR RESCUE

A mid-air, platform to platform rescue should only be considered in exceptional circumstances and only after:

- All normal and auxiliary lowering procedures have been attempted and the platform cannot be lowered.
- Site management have contacted the appropriate service technician listed in the rescue plan, to report failure of normal and auxiliary lowering systems and request servicing assistance.

If the service technician is unable to affect a timely repair to allow the machine to be brought to the ground safely site management should be contacted for permission to carry out mid-air rescue. Or where the service technician assistance is not readily available and an immediate risk exists to the health and safety of any of the occupants from remaining in the MEWP until a technician can arrive, then site management should be contacted for authorisation to carry out mid-air rescue.

## WHERE SHOULD THE RESCUE PLAN BE KEPT?

The most important issue is to communicate the rescue plan. However, in the event of a larger number of personnel on site it may be necessary to display the rescue plan and keep it in plain view - on site where personnel are aware of its location.

## WHO IS INVOLVED IN A RESCUE PLAN?

All site-based personnel should be involved in looking after the wellbeing of personnel on a site and should know who to report an incident to. The site manager/supervisor, operator, nominated ground personnel\* should all be aware of the rescue plan and where necessary practice the plan.

**The rescue plan should be reviewed with all personnel exposed to the risk of working at height and those supervising and managing the same work at height.**

**\*Nominated Personnel** – person or persons assigned to be able to perform an emergency lower using either the ground controls or ground based emergency lower control –this person should be briefed on use of the ground controls (both normal and auxiliary) OR receive specific training as required for this task.

### USEFUL REFERENCES:

- ANSI A92 standards for the lift in use
- IPAF Guidance on the Assessment of Ground Conditions
- IPAF H1/08/12 Fall protection in mobile elevating work platforms
- OSHA CFR 1926.502 fall protection regulations
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