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What is a MEWP-specific safe-use plan and why do I need to use one?



Mobile Elevating Work Platforms (MEWPs), formerly known as AWP, are one of the safest ways to conduct temporary work at height. IPAF's [analysis of accidents](#) involving the use of MEWPs shows they could often have been prevented by good planning, selecting the correct machine, working to best practice guidance and using trained operators under proper supervision throughout.

If you are operating or planning to operate MEWPs for a work at height task, ask yourself how safe and productive your project will be if:

- A trained MEWP operator is given a lift with a platform that is 9ft short of the required reach?
- A trained operator is required to operate a machine with completely different controls and functions than those he has previously operated?
- An operator has to work or travel near overhead powerlines and is focused on the task rather than the risk of coming too close or even touching the high-voltage cables?
- A MEWP is delivered but it won't fit in the area available to store or operate the machine?
- The person you are asking to operate the MEWP has never operated one before?

The list of examples could be endless, those outlined above are a selection to demonstrate that accidents will nearly always be traced back to problems that could have been prevented through better planning: A MEWP-specific safe-use plan ensures a MEWP user (employer) has safe-use protocols in place to influence good behaviors and ensure effective management of risks associated with work at height and those specific to the type of work being planned. This should be communicated with all those affected so they can prevent incidents from occurring and to know the required actions to take if something unexpected happens.

In the US, OSHA regulations addressing the use of "aerial lifts" were written in 1970 and provide limited requirements to underpin the effective planning of safe MEWP operations. The ANSI industry standards on the other hand require reviews every five to ten years and define more detailed responsibilities for users and the safe and effective planning and management of MEWP operations. They expand beyond OSHA's requirements and address the application, inspection, training, maintenance, repair and safe operation for all involved – even those not directly involved who may be exposed in case of an unplanned incident.

The **new ANSI A92.22 Safe Use standard requires all users to develop a MEWP-specific safe-use plan**. Over the page we explain how to develop a MEWP-specific safe-use plan.



OSHA requires all employers to provide a workplace safe from harm. MEWP operations require a risk assessment, trained personnel, proper selection of equipment and other tasks that demand specific knowledge and information. A MEWP-specific safe-use plan will ensure that personnel have all the pieces to the safe-use puzzle in place to apply to each site where MEWP operations will be carried out.

A MEWP-specific safe-use plan takes a systematic approach to safety for all persons operating/occupying a MEWP, persons and other equipment in the work area, and the safety of any person, such as the general public, not involved directly with MEWP operations but adjacent to or likely to come into proximity of the work area. It will address how you can prevent accidents and improve the productive use of the equipment.

A MEWP-specific safe-use plan must address and apply all of the requirements for a MEWP user included in the **ANSI A92 safe use** and **A92.24 training standards**, specifically:

- A site risk assessment must be performed to identify hazards, evaluate risk, develop control measures – including a rescue plan – and is communicated with affected persons.
- Correct selection, provision and use of a suitable MEWP and associated equipment must be made.
- Access to, preparation and maintenance of the site is identified. This includes an assessment that the ground is adequate to support the weight of the MEWP.
- MEWP maintenance, inspection(s) and any repairs are conducted by qualified persons.
- Only trained and authorized personnel are allowed to operate and/or occupy the MEWP.
- Familiarization is provided to authorized MEWP operator(s) with the specific MEWP to be used
- All MEWP operators are informed of local site requirements, and warned about and provided with the means to protect against identified hazards in the areas where the MEWP will be operated.
- Trained and qualified supervisor(s) must be assigned to monitor the operator's use of the MEWP and to ensure compliance with the plan.
- Processes are in place to prevent unauthorized use of the MEWP.
- Consideration/actions are in place to address safety of persons not involved in MEWP operations.
- All required documentation is completed and maintained.

Merely listing the bullets above is not a safe-use plan. **Developing the plan is *not* the end result.** It is critical to ensure that good job management, safety control and the application of sound principles of safety, training, inspection, maintenance, repair, application and operation are strictly adhered to at all times.

For instance, it is not enough that MEWP operators have an assigned supervisor. A good supervisor with no knowledge about MEWP safety and operations will be ineffective at identifying MEWP-specific issues. To be an effective MEWP supervisor, personnel must successfully complete MEWP supervisor training as defined in ANSI A92.24 training standard and be qualified to monitor MEWP operations and assesses the MEWP operators on an ongoing basis.

A MEWP-specific safe-use plan takes into account the unique requirements, operating characteristics of the equipment, different types of equipment and applications of thereof, with specific planning, preparation and actions required to ensure a safe and productive workplace.

- For more information or to find specific technical & safety guidance visit www.ipaf.org/resources or search www.ipaf.org/contact to find your nearest IPAF office or representative.