



FALLS FROM HEIGHT: DON'T FALL FOR IT! TOOLBOX TALK

WHAT IS THE RISK?

Mobile Elevating Work Platforms (MEWPs), are a safe and effective means of access for undertaking temporary work at height tasks. It is important to remember a MEWP is only as safe as the person who is operating it. If this equipment is used incorrectly, unsafely or by inexperienced people, accidents and fatalities are more likely to happen.

This Toolbox Talk provides some safety measures which can reduce the risk of falls from the platform.

IPAF ACCIDENT DATA INFORMS US THAT THE MOST COMMON TYPES OF FALLS FROM THE PLATFORM OCCUR BY:

- Not wearing a safety harness and not attaching a lanyard in boom-type MEWPs;
- over reaching;
- using the guardrails or toe boards to gain extra reach;
- the MEWP being hit by an object or vehicle and the operator and occupants are ejected from the platform;
- technical or mechanical failure;
- Violation/behavioural incidents.

WHAT CAN I DO TO MINIMISE THE RISK OF A FALL OCCURRING?

Plan thoroughly – Machine selection is critical. Where possible, conduct a professional site survey to ensure you have the correct machine for the job, this survey will include the machine's working height and outreach required, the weight and size of the machine and its proximity to other equipment and structures.

Know your machine – Operators should be trained on the category of machine and be familiarised on the specific model they are using.

Correct machine familiarisation could potentially reduce the risk of a fall from the platform.

WHO NEEDS TO KNOW?

This Toolbox Talk applies to everyone involved with the operation of a Mobile Elevating Work Platform (MEWP):

- Equipment rental companies
- Users/hirers of MEWPs
- Operators of MEWPs

Familiarisation will cover anchor points, entry and exit to the platform, safe working load, maximum allowable wind speed and other key areas to prevent falls occurring.

Clip On! – If personal fall protection equipment (PFPE) is required, all occupants in the platform must attach their lanyards to the correct anchor point. Ensure occupants' movement within the platform is possible while their lanyards are attached, and do not move the machine or elevate the platform until, and unless, all occupants' lanyards are attached.

Set-up and manoeuvre the machine/platform effectively

– Operators need to ensure that machines are set up in a safe area and that they operate in a safe manner. Knowing the operational characteristics of the machine is crucial, you need to take into account the machine's tail swing when working in confined areas and the boom and drive ramp effect when operating. Operators must never extend the platform outside the operational envelope of the machine.

The safest place is for your feet to stay on the platform deck

– The guardrails of the platform are the primary fall prevention method and define the operational envelope of the machine being used. Under normal circumstances you should never exit the platform at height; unclip/exit only on completion of work when the machine is safely lowered to the ground. If there is an exceptional case where a MEWP must be used to gain access or to work from an area at height, then a robust risk assessment must be carried out clearly demonstrating that it is the safest and most effective means of accessing a particular location.

REMEMBER

**Safety starts with you!
Work safe and go home safe.**

USEFUL REFERENCES

- IPAF Operators Safety Guide (available on the ePAL app www.ipaf.org/ePAL)
- IPAF Fall Protection in MEWPs guidance (H1) (available at www.ipaf.org/resources)
- IPAF Familiarisation guidance (F1) (available at www.ipaf.org/resources)
- IPAF Exiting the Platform at Height guidance (E2) (available at www.ipaf.org/resources)