

# NEVER ATTACH A BANNER TO A MEWP TOOLBOX TALK

The purpose of a Mobile Elevating Work Platform (MEWP) is to elevate people to a position to perform temporary work at height safely. They are not designed to be used as advertising displays. All MEWPs are designed and tested to international standards and have specified limits such as load capacity and wind speed. MEWPs have a maximum allowable wind loading and specific allowable surface area to maintain stability.

## WHAT IS THE RISK?

Attaching banners/signs to a MEWP increases the likelihood of overturn. If a sign or banner is attached to a MEWP's guardrail or elevating structure whilst elevated, it creates a sail because it increases the surface area of the MEWP. This is known as the "Sail Effect" and can potentially lead to the MEWP overturning.

## WHAT ARE THE CONSEQUENCES OF A MEWP OVERTURNING?

If a MEWP is used in winds, higher than the maximum allowable wind speed, they can potentially overturn. This can result in:

- Death or major injuries to platform occupants
- Death or major injuries to personnel/public at ground level
- Damage to property, equipment, and the environment

## WIND SPEED FACTS:

- Wind speed will often increase the higher the platform is elevated. For example, if a MEWP is elevated 20 metres, the wind speed can be 50% faster than it is at ground level.
- Wind speed can also increase as it travels between buildings – this is often referred to as the funnelling or venturi effect.
- Wind can accelerate especially around irregular shaped structures/buildings forming vortices.
- Strong gusts of wind can develop without warning

## WHO NEEDS TO KNOW?

This Toolbox Talk applies to all individuals involved with the safe operation of a MEWP, including:

- User (the person or company who has control of the MEWP on site)
- MEWP operator
- Nominated ground control rescue person
- Managers and Supervisors

## EXAMPLES OF MATERIALS THAT CAN CREATE A SAIL

- Signs and banners
- Glass panels
- Sheeting and netting which is attached to the platform
- Panelling and cladding
- Any object with a large surface area

## PLANNING FOR WORK

- Planning is critical. A risk assessment should be performed, and a Safe System of Work (SSoW) developed.
- Ensure there is a documented Rescue Plan in place.
- Ensure the MEWP operator is trained and familiarised with the MEWP.
- Ensure there is a nominated ground control rescue person in place, and they have been familiarised with the ground controls and emergency lowering system.
- If you intend to use a MEWP outdoors (exposed to wind), check the maximum allowable wind speed for the MEWP. This information can be found on the MEWP data plate, and on the wind speed decal which is normally located in the platform. Note: Some MEWPs are for indoor use only.
- Know the wind speed where the work platform will be operating. Use an anemometer (digital wind speed meter) for an accurate wind speed or refer to the Beaufort Scale for an approximate indication.

## REMEMBER!

- MEWPs can overturn if the maximum allowable wind speed is exceeded.
- If the wind speed is too high, lower the platform immediately.
- Do not elevate if it is too windy.
- Report any unsafe acts and conditions.

## USEFUL REFERENCES

- IPAF Operators' Safety Guide
- Andy Access poster (available at [www.ipaf.org/andyaccess](http://www.ipaf.org/andyaccess))
- Statement of Best Practices for Workplace Risk Assessment and Aerial Work Platform Equipment Selection (available at [www.ipaf.org/resources](http://www.ipaf.org/resources))
- Exhibition Guidelines for Powered Access Machines (available at [www.ipaf.org/resources](http://www.ipaf.org/resources))
- Manufacturer's Operating Manual