Mobile Elevated Work Platforms (MEWPs) Meeting Kit

WHAT'S AT STAKE

So when we're talking about Mobile Elevated Work Platforms – those boom lifts and scissor lifts you see around – there's a lot more at stake than just getting the job done up high. Think about it: these machines lift people way off the ground, so the biggest worry, hands down, is someone taking a bad fall. That can lead to really serious injuries or worse, and nobody wants that. Plus, if a MEWP tips over or crashes, it can cause a ton of damage to whatever it hits, and that costs a lot of money and time to fix.

WHAT'S THE DANGER

When you're up in the air on a Mobile Elevated Work Platform, there are a few key things that can turn a regular workday into a really bad situation if we're not on our toes. Obviously, taking a tumble from way up high is the big one – whether it's because you're not clipped in right, the railings aren't solid, or you just lean too far. Then you've got to watch out for the whole thing tipping over, which can happen if the ground's uneven, you've got too much weight up there, or you're reaching out too far.

It's also easy to forget about getting squeezed or pinned if you're working close to walls or ceilings while the platform's moving. And electricity is a huge hazard, especially if you're anywhere near power lines. Plus, anything you've got up on the platform – tools, bits of material – could easily fall and hit someone down below. Below are some additional risks.

Mechanical Failures: Although less common with well-maintained equipment, mechanical failures can occur. This could involve issues with the hydraulic system, brakes, tires, or structural

components like the boom. Regular inspections and maintenance are crucial to identify and address potential problems before they lead to accidents.

Environmental Conditions: Weather plays a significant role in MEWP safety. High winds can make the platform unstable and difficult to control. Rain, snow, or ice can create slippery surfaces and reduce visibility. Extreme temperatures can also affect both the equipment’s performance and the operator’s alertness and dexterity.

Lack of Proper Training and Familiarization: Operating a MEWP requires specific training. Untrained or improperly trained operators are far more likely to make errors that lead to dangerous situations. Familiarization with the specific model being used is also crucial, as controls and operating characteristics can vary.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

Before You Even Get On: Training and Inspection

- Don’t just assume you know how to use a MEWP because you’ve seen one before. Get certified training specific to the type of MEWP you’ll be operating (e.g., scissor lift, boom lift).
- This isn’t just a quick glance. Follow the manufacturer’s checklist carefully every single time before you use the MEWP. This includes:
    - Checking fluid levels (hydraulic, fuel, etc.).
    - Inspecting tires or tracks for damage and proper inflation/tension.
    - Verifying that all guards, railings, and gates are in place and secure.
    - Testing all controls from the ground and the platform to ensure they function smoothly and correctly.
    - Checking the emergency stop button to make sure it works.
    - Looking for any signs of leaks, cracks, or damage to the structure, hoses, and wiring.

- Ensuring that safety devices like tilt alarms and limit switches are operational.
- Confirming that the work area is clear of obstructions and hazards.

While You’re Operating: Safe Operating Practices

- **Ground and Stability First:** Before extending, always assess the ground conditions. Is it level? Is it firm enough to support the MEWP’s weight, especially when loaded and extended? Use ground protection mats or outriggers/stabilizers as required by the manufacturer’s instructions and the ground conditions. Ensure outriggers are fully deployed and locked.
- **Respect the Load Limits:** Know the rated working load (RWL) of the MEWP and stay within it. Remember that this includes the weight of the operator(s), tools, and materials. Don’t guess – check the manufacturer’s plate. Be mindful of how the load is distributed on the platform.
- **Situational Awareness is Constant:** Continuously scan your surroundings for potential hazards. Look up for overhead power lines, structures, or obstructions. Be aware of other workers and equipment in the area. Pay attention to wind conditions – know the MEWP’s wind speed limitations and stop work if it gets too gusty.
- **Smooth and Controlled Movements:** Operate the MEWP smoothly and avoid jerky or sudden movements, especially when raising, lowering, or extending the platform. This helps maintain stability and prevents unexpected shifts in weight.
- **Body Positioning and Platform Safety:** Keep all parts of your body inside the platform and away from moving parts of the MEWP. Never climb on the railings or use them as a work surface. Use the designated entry and exit points. If the platform has gates, ensure they are closed and latched during operation.
- **Communication is Key:** If working with others, establish clear communication signals before starting work. If there are ground personnel, ensure they understand the planned movements and potential hazards.

FINAL WORD

Staying safe with MEWPs really comes down to being smart and following the rules every single time. So, basically, there are a bunch of things that can go wrong if we’re not paying attention and following the safety rules.