

SAFE LOADING AND UNLOADING OF MEWPS ON PUBLIC HIGHWAYS

1. INTRODUCTION

When a MEWP is delivered or collected from a site, loading and unloading on the public highway should be avoided wherever possible. The aim is to minimise risk to employees and members of the public by ensuring delivery vehicles park away from public highways and pavements.

The User/hirer is responsible for providing a designated safe area for (un)loading activity to take place. The designated area should be of sufficient size, well-lit, on firm and level ground, be segregated from other work activities, free of traffic, pedestrians and clear of overhead or underground hazards. To achieve this, consider changing the layout of the yard or parking area to allow loading and unloading within the work site. Alternatively, request smaller delivery vehicles when placing the original order and check this when receiving confirmation of any delivery or collection of equipment.

For construction operations, consider delivery vehicle access at the design stage and incorporate appropriate rules into the construction safety plan. If use of the highway is unavoidable, local authorities may impose conditions on the practice and enforce these in the event of contravention.



2. SCOPE

This guidance identifies measures to be implemented by rental companies, their customers, contractors, and transport companies to reduce the risk should it be necessary to load or unload MEWPs on the public highway.

3. INITIAL RISK ASSESSMENT AND COMMUNICATION

Where, after suitable risk assessment has been performed, there is a need to (un)load a MEWP on a public highway, the User/hirer is required to provide a safe place of work and manage the (un)load environment. This should be done by identifying and documenting the safe procedure for (un)loading operations and making it clear to all involved, including employers of visiting transport companies and the drivers themselves.

At no time during the (un)load process shall any part of the MEWP be allowed to extend or slew into traffic. Risks arising from (un)loading on the public highway may be reduced by one or a combination of the following (this is not an exhaustive list): -

- Schedule deliveries to avoid peak traffic periods (may be limited by local-authority restrictions on times of delivery and/or complaints from residents, especially if reversing alarms are used). Problems may arise when (un)loading during school arrival or departure times.
- Identify where the delivery vehicle will park on the highway, considering the proximity of the site entrance to bus routes and narrow roads. Where practical and safe to do so, reserve parking space by placing marked cones at kerb side – allow an extended length of kerb to incorporate a suitable 'run-off' distance at the rear of the transport vehicle. The run-off distance should allow for the MEWP to clear the transport vehicle.
- Consider which way the vehicle should face in order to increase visibility (normally facing traffic). The driver might have to stand and operate ramp-lowering levers on the side of the vehicle. Avoid movements involving the MEWP or persons crossing the traffic flow.
- Where needed, provide a competent and authorised supervisor/signaller wearing high visibility clothing positioned in a safe place using agreed hand signals. Signallers should give priority to the passage of pedestrians and other road users. Signallers have no authority to stop traffic.
- Where cones or barriers need to be placed on the highway, the duty holder should discuss with the police and the highway authority. Pedestrians should not be directed into the road.
- Provide adequate lighting in hours of darkness.
- Take any other precautions applicable to the specific location.

Having considered the above, the User/hirer should confirm the need to (un)load on the public highway with the rental company as soon as reasonably possible, preferably when confirming delivery and collection details as part of the machine order. This will allow agreed plans to be incorporated into delivery documents to identify a competent representative who will manage the (un)loading operation.

4. TRAINING

Only appropriately trained operators, supervisors, managers, or other persons should be engaged in the assessment of any loading or unloading on the public highway. It is recommended that drivers undertake recognised load and unload training such as [IPAF's Load and Unload course](#). Contractors, managers, and supervisors should undertake suitable training such as [IPAF's MEWPs for Managers course](#). Any involved personnel should have the power to stop the (un)loading on safety grounds.

5. VEHICLE AND EQUIPMENT

The choice of vehicle depends on its suitability to safely transport the specific units, as well as site access and egress requirements. For example, the machine(s) being transported could dictate the need for a full-width ramp instead of split or moveable ramps, a winch (consider load/unload sequence to ensure the winch is accessible for machines that require winch assistance), ramp gradient, low-profile ramps for machines with low ground clearance, sufficient anchor chains/straps, warning beacons (especially where rear lights are obscured) etc.

The vehicle must be conspicuous: High-visibility chevron markings are strongly recommended. It is recommended that transport vehicles must have one or more amber warning beacons, with at least one beacon visible from any direction at sufficient distance to allow approaching vehicles to stop safely. Also consider the need for additional equipment to provide a safe (un)load area with equipment such as: Signs, vehicle work lights, sufficient cones for the length of the vehicle.



6. PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE)

Appropriate high-visibility PPE should be worn throughout (un)load process, including:

- A full body harness and an adjustable restraint lanyard
- Eye protection
- Hearing protection
- Protective gloves
- Safety helmet
- High-visibility warning clothing (normally fluorescent yellow or orange-red)
- Safety footwear
- There may be extra PPE requirements on motorways and other high-speed roads. The Hirer/user should communicate any additional site PPE requirements.

Remember: Other site-specific PPE may be required. Ensure the vehicle has all necessary PPE equipment prior to departure; this is often part of the vehicle-specific equipment.

7. ARRIVAL AT SITE

Upon approaching the site, the driver should activate the roof-mounted amber beacon(s). On arrival, the driver should contact the person who is in charge of unloading on the site (where applicable). If it is not possible to park on site or off the road, the driver should park facing oncoming traffic wherever practical and make sure the vehicle can be seen by other drivers. It is important not to obstruct a footway or cycle route when parking off the road, and respect access to premises and driveways. Pedestrian access to premises should be maintained at all times. It is strongly recommended for drivers to phone ahead to advise of arrival times (especially around airports and railway stations).

8. CONDUCTING A DYNAMIC RISK ASSESSMENT

Upon arrival and before starting any (un)load activity, the driver should conduct a visual assessment of the designated area to identify any hazards, which may impose significant risk during the (un)load operation. Drivers need to be appropriately trained to be able to undertake such assessments. Where relevant hazards are identified, these should be addressed jointly with a representative of the User/hirer and/or nominated person involved in the unloading activity before starting work. Such a dynamic risk assessment should consider but not be limited to:

- Other traffic
- Pedestrians
- Speed of traffic and highway speed restrictions
- Road layout – junctions, traffic signals, bends, crests of hills
- Road camber – uneven or sloping ground
- Visibility restrictions such as trees and bushes, parked vehicles
- Ground conditions such as: Inspection covers, drains and services
- Railway level crossings, tramways, bus, cycle routes or pedestrian routes

- Overhead power lines or obstructions
- Any commercial premises (to consider access and egress) or other works nearby
- Street or site lighting and natural light levels
- Weather and site/road surface conditions
- Delivery time restrictions and peak periods, e.g., commuter rush hour, school pick-up/drop-offs
- Avoid level crossings, tram crossings, pedestrian, cycle, or equestrian crossings and be mindful of localised parking restrictions.

Caution: Most MEWPs requiring transport to site are not built for or licenced for use on public highways. Therefore, it is important to minimise the distance driven from point of unload to the site and consider in the risk assessment if an escort vehicle and/or police and highway authority permissions are needed.

IF THE SITUATION IS NOT COVERED BY THE METHODS OUTLINED ABOVE, CONTACT THE USER/HIRER OR SITE SUPERVISOR – DO NOT ATTEMPT LOADING OR UNLOADING.

9. THE LOAD/UNLOAD PROCESS

At no time during process should any part of the MEWP be allowed to extend or slew into traffic because of the risk of impact or collision with passing vehicles. Loading or unloading on the public highway is a high-risk activity and should be risk assessed, the requirement for control measures such as cones, traffic barriers and signage will be identified in the risk assessment. By carrying out load/unload during non-peak periods may reduce the number of risk control methods, some examples are shown below: -



- The vehicle must be clearly visible to approaching vehicles.
- The vehicle must have one or more roof-mounted beacon(s) operating.
- Use hazard warning lights.
- Do not obstruct active bus lanes or emergency vehicle access.

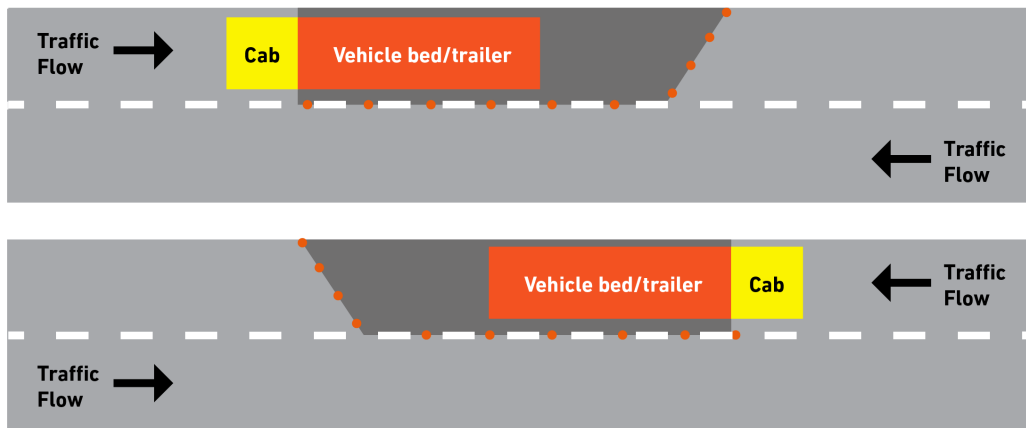
Avoid the following situations (where this is not possible, additional measures are required):

- The transport vehicle cannot be seen clearly because of hills, bends in the road, etc.
- Working near to a junction.
- Causing stationary traffic tail backs to form.
- Leaving insufficient space for two-way traffic to pass the transport vehicle.
- Working on or adjacent to dual carriageways.
- Once the MEWP is safely off the public highway, the process should be completed by stowing and securing ramps. This should be done before machine handover.

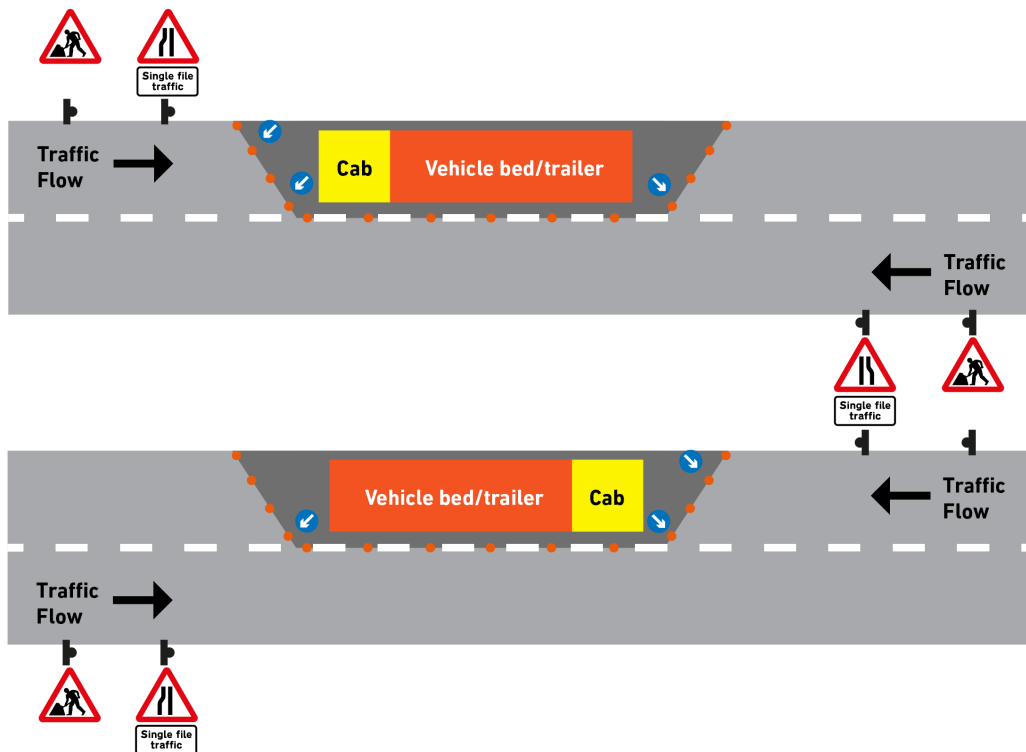
10. EXAMPLE OF HIGH RISK OR LONG DURATION UN/LOAD WORK:

Safe load and unload area dimensions must be determined before setting signs out. The layout, size and distance of advance signs depend on road type, speed limits, visibility on approach to the proposed works site – is it on a bend, a dip in the road, or brow of a hill?

Example 1:



Example 2:



Signs are illustrative and you should use the appropriate signs for your country or region.

Where cones or signs are used, the (un)loading must not start until the working area is safely segregated. If footway closures are necessary, it should be planned for in advance by contacting the local highway authority.

11. DEPARTURE FROM SITE

Before leaving the site, the driver needs to check the cleanliness and security of the load and vehicle, taking into account vehicle and pedestrian movements on the public highway to ensure this is done with minimal risk. The driver should check machines to ensure that hatches or canopies are secured to prevent opening during transit, and whether any additional securing measure is required. The driver should also ensure that any signs or equipment used to segregate a safe load and unload area is removed in such a way that maximises visibility to other road users for as long as possible when leaving the (un)load work area and rejoining the road. After leaving the (un)load area and having safely rejoined the carriageway, the driver should turn off roof-mounted amber beacon(s) unless required for an abnormal load.

12. REFERENCES

In addition to this guidance, it is recommended to read and review the following materials:

- [IPAF Safe Loading & Unloading Training Course](#)
- [IPAF Safe Loading & Unloading+ Training Course](#)
- [IPAF Best Practice Guidance – Load and Unload](#)
- [Andy Access poster – Caution When Loading & Unloading](#)

For more details and information about the **IPAF Safe Loading, Unloading and Transportation of MEWPs** safety campaign go to www.ipaf.org/safe.

