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MEWPS AND RAILWAY INFRASTRUCTURE
TOOLBOX TALK

This Toolbox Talk provides information on the associated hazards and risks involved with mobile elevating work platforms (MEWPs) working near railways and crossing active and non-active rail crossings.

OPERATING MEWPS NEAR RAILWAYS
Operating MEWPs near railways can present additional hazards to operators. The person requiring the temporary work at height to be undertaken must ensure that this work is planned effectively, either eliminating or mitigating the hazards and risks identified in the risk assessment.

HAZARDS AND RISKS
- Passing vehicles or trains causing wind vortices.
- MEWPs being struck by moving trains or vehicles.
- Uneven or unstable ground resulting in overturns.
- Proximity to banks and excavations, hidden voids such as drains or ducts, resulting in overturns.
- MEWPs overturning on to, or near to, rail boundary or tracks.
- Breakdown of a MEWP or delivery vehicle in the exclusion zone of rail lines/crossings. (Exclusion zone distances can vary, check with the rail network provider).
- Power lines or other electrical equipment present a real risk of electrocution.

CONTROL MEASURES TO REDUCE THE RISK
- Consultation with rail authority for a permit to work.
- The provision of segregated areas for MEWP operations.
- Use trained and familiarized operators.
- Supervision of all MEWP operations.
- Thorough risk assessment and safe work procedures

THERE ARE TWO TYPES OF RAILWAY CROSSING
- **Actively protected level crossings**
  These are actively secured by means of flashing lights, bells, and barriers that close the crossing to road traffic and pedestrians when a train is approaching.

WHO NEEDS TO KNOW?
This Toolbox Talk applies to all individuals involved in operating a MEWP near railway infrastructure.
- Users.
- Managers and supervisors.
- Operators.
- Ground rescue personnel.

- **Non-actively protected level crossings**
  These are level crossings in which a road-user (walker, cyclist, or motorist) must assess whether they can safely cross the track based on their own observations. There is no active warning in the form of level crossing gates, bells, or lights when a train approaches.
- You must follow the instructions provided by the rail owner at these level crossings for safe passage across the tracks.

CROSSING RAILWAY INFRASTRUCTURE
- Never drive across rail tracks with self-propelled MEWPs as there is a serious risk of impact from trains if there is a machine breakdown or incident.
- Some MEWPs are fitted with tracks that can damage supporting infrastructure and safety devices. Anyone who intends to move MEWPs with tracks must use a suitable trailer to transport the MEWP across the rail tracks.
- Delivery drivers of slow or long machines must stop and call the rail authority before attempting to cross the line.

MEWP POSITIONING
- A MEWP must be positioned so that no part of the machine can enter the active rail boundary during operation.

WHAT SHOULD I DO?
- Read and review risk assessments for validity and relevancy to the task.
- Report problems or potential problems.
- If in doubt, do not put yourself at risk. Stop and ask.

USEFUL REFERENCES
- IPAF Operators Safety Guide (available on the ePAL app www.ipaf.org/ePAL)
- IPAF Working next to railways guidance (available via www.ipaf.org/resources)
- Manufacturer Operators Manual (available via www.ipaf.org/manufacturers)
- Railroad Workplace Safety; Adjacent-Track On-Track Safety for Roadway Workers | Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), Department of Transportation (DOT) (available via railroads.dot.gov)