



MEWP GROUND CONDITIONS TOOLBOX TALK

WHY ARE GROUND CONDITIONS SO IMPORTANT?

Ground conditions are critical for the stability of a Mobile Elevating Work Platform (MEWP). Unsuitable ground conditions can result in the MEWP overturning with potential loss of life for platform occupants and personnel at ground level, as well as damage to equipment and property.

This Toolbox Talk provides information on the hazards and risks associated with unsuitable ground, and suggests controls measures to reduce the risk of overturn.

GROUND CONDITION HAZARDS

- Sloping or uneven surfaces
- proximity to excavations, soft ground or uncompacted fill
- Frozen ground, or ground covered by snow or ice that softens as it thaws
- Underground services e.g., manhole covers and drains
- Public areas e.g., paved areas, floors, cellars and basements
- Inadequate surfaces which are unable to sustain the ground bearing pressures imposed by the MEWP in all operating configurations

WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW?

- The weight of the MEWP (this can be found on the compliance/data plate and in the MEWP operator manual)
- The maximum point load pressure, this is normally shown on decals/stickers near each wheel and in the operator manual
- The ground's load bearing capacity (consult the site facility owner if unsure)
- Machine selection is critical - not all MEWPs are the same, some are designed to be driven on rough terrain in the stowed position. MEWPs can be fitted with tracks, or have 4-wheel drive

WHO NEEDS TO KNOW?

This Toolbox Talk applies to all individuals involved with 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

systems and oscillating axles. MEWPs fitted with oscillating axles keep the 4 wheels in contact with the ground to provide better traction

PLANNING

- Ensure a competent person performs a risk assessment of the ground conditions
- Consider a ground bearing pressure survey if you are unsure of the ground's ability to support the MEWP
- Ensure the correct MEWP has been selected
- Use the appropriate size spreader pads based on the MEWP weight and ground type
- Preparation and maintenance of the site as required to ensure it is capable of handling the ground bearing pressures imposed by the MEWP in all configurations

OPERATION

- Plan your route, always walk the route first and look out for any hazards
- Ground conditions can change daily due to weather conditions or site work. The condition of the ground should be monitored, if there are any signs of the MEWP sinking you should immediately stop work and lower the platform
- For Type 1 MEWPs with stabilizers/outriggers, position them correctly on suitably sized spreader pads

ON COMPLETION

- Park the MEWP on a firm level surface
- Lower the platform to the stowed position
- Remove the keys and isolate the MEWP

USEFUL REFERENCES

- IPAF MEWP Operator's Safety Guide (section 6.6)
- Technical guidance document 'Guidance on the Assessment of Ground Conditions' (available at www.ipaf.org/resources) Andy Access 'ground conditions' and 'setting up on a slope' posters (available at www.ipaf.org/andyaccess)
- IPAF spreader pad poster and leaflet (available at www.ipaf.org/resources) IPAF Ground Pressure Calculator www.ipaf.org/pads