



AVOID OVERHEAD OBSTRUCTIONS TOOLBOX TALK

Mobile Elevating Work Platforms (MEWPs) are sometimes used to work in confined areas, or near overhead structures. The risk of entrapment or crushing is increased when operating in these areas, so the work needs to be planned, and carried out safely. Incidents of entrapment or crushing can occur when the MEWP is travelling in the stowed and raised positions, or when the platform is elevated. This Toolbox Talk provides information on how to reduce the risk of contact with overhead obstructions.

ENTRAPMENT OR CRUSHING CAN BE CAUSED BY:

- Not looking in the direction of movement, or lack of awareness while operating a MEWP
- Selecting the wrong control, or moving the MEWP in the wrong direction when close to overhead obstructions
- Operating the MEWP erratically, or too fast when close to overhead obstructions
- Driving over uneven ground whilst elevated
- Not providing enough stopping distance when operating close to overhead obstructions or buildings
- Sudden movements of the boom caused when travelling into a kerb, or ditch, or when released after being snagged. The flexible movement of the boom can result in increased motion of the platform

WHAT SHOULD BE DONE AT THE PLANNING STAGE?

- Carry out a risk assessment and develop a Safe System of Work (SSoW). Ensure the SSoW is communicated to, and understood by the MEWP operator
- Ensure the MEWP operator is trained and familiarised with the specific model of MEWP. The familiarisation should include the necessary pre-use inspection requirements of the secondary guarding system (if fitted)
- Verify that the Rescue Plan is valid and in place

WHO NEEDS TO KNOW?

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

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

- Where there is a foreseeable specified risk of crushing or entrapment, a MEWP with a suitable secondary guarding system should be selected
- Ensure the nominated ground control rescue person is familiarised with the specific model of MEWP

MEWP OPERATORS

- Always walk the route first, checking for overhead hazards prior to operating the MEWP
- Make sure you have been familiarised with the MEWP, and you are confident you can operate it safely
- When positioning the MEWP, ensure the ground controls and the emergency lowering controls are easily accessible in case of an emergency
- Ensure there is a nominated ground control rescue person in place
- Always be aware of your surroundings and platform occupants, don't be complacent, that's when accidents happen
- Do not drive, elevate or slew the MEWP unless you have checked all around you
- Operate the platform controls slowly and deliberately
- Use the correct sequence of motion when operating, use fine control movements last
- Do not lower the platform unless you have checked for hazards below you
- If you feel the situation is not safe, immediately lower the platform and report the issue to your supervisor

REMEMBER

- **Look up** before you lift
- **Look around** before you move
- **Look down** before you lower the platform

USEFUL REFERENCES

- IPAF Operators Safety Guide
- The Safe Use of MEWPs When Using Pedestrian Controls
- Manufacturer Operators Manual (available via www.ipaf.org/manufacturers)
- Good Practice Guidance for Reducing Trapping/Crushing Injuries to People in MEWPs