

Introduction

This leaflet describes the safe working practices to be followed when using a mobile elevating work platform (MEWP) for tree work. It is applicable when a risk assessment has determined that a MEWP, rather than climbing from ground level, is the appropriate access method for the work.

You can use this leaflet, along with the manufacturer's handbook, as part of the risk assessment process to help identify the controls to put in place when using a MEWP for tree work.

All operators must have had appropriate training in how to operate the machine and how to carry out the tasks required (see AFAG leaflet 805 *Training and certification*).

General

- 1 Risk assessment must be carried out before starting work. All staff must agree and understand a plan of operations and emergency procedures in case of, for example, failure of controls or injury.
- 2 Identify the appropriate equipment, personal protective equipment (PPE) and number of operatives required.
- 3 Everyone must be fit to undertake the task. Report all problems that could affect performance to management.
- 4 Select the correct MEWP for the task. Consider the ground conditions, height and reach and the type of work to be done.
- 5 The operator should be secured within the MEWP carrier (bucket/basket) by a work-positioning system. Normally this will be a sit harness and short lanyard attached to a purpose-made attachment point within the carrier.
- 6 Ensure all operations near to highways are adequately signed with the appropriate notices as specified in the DTLR Code of Practice *Safety at street works and road works* (available from The Stationery Office ISBN 0 11 551958 0).
- 7 Dangerous occurrences involving MEWPs must be reported to the Health and Safety Executive (see HSE leaflet HSE31(rev1) *RIDDOR explained*).

Personal protective equipment (PPE)

- 8 **While no PPE can provide 100% protection against cuts from chainsaws**, the following should be used by workers using chainsaws:
 - Asafety helmet (complying with EN 397) with a suitable chinstrap when working from the platform or climbing.
 - Eye protection (a mesh visor complying with EN 1731 or safety glasses to EN 166).

- Hearing protection (complying with EN 352).
- Gloves* with protective guarding on the back of the left hand for ground use of chainsaws (complying with EN 381-7). Chainsaw gloves are not essential for chainsaw use in trees.
- Leg protection* and groin protection (Type C for climbers, Type A or C for ground staff) incorporating chain-clogging material (complying with EN 381-5).
- Protective boots* with good grip and protective guarding at front vamp and instep (complying with EN 345-2).

- Non-snap outer clothing. The use of high-visibility clothing may also be appropriate.
- 9 Workers not using a chainsaw should wear the following:
 - Asafety helmet (complying with EN 397) with a suitable chinstrap when working from the platform or climbing.
 - Protective boots with good grip and ankle support (complying with EN 345-1).
 - Non-snap outer clothing. The use of high-visibility clothing may also be appropriate.
 - Suitable work gloves, not essential during tree climbing.
- 10 Each person should carry a personal first-aid kit including a large wound dressing (see HSE leaflet INDG214 *First aid at work: Your questions answered*).
- 11 All climbers should carry a suitable knife with a retractable blade.
- 12 Hand-cleaning material such as waterless skin cleanser or soap, water and paper towels should be readily available.

Operators

- 13 Only trained and authorised people may operate the platform. Other people in the tree-work gang must be able to lower the platform, both by means of the controls on it and any emergency controls below on the platform mounting. A minimum of two people in the gang is essential. If the MEWP is hired, the operator and ground staff should be familiar with the instructions and controls before starting work.

Preparing to work

- 14 Checks must be made that the vehicle/machine is safe and, where applicable, roadworthy before work each day. Checks should be in accordance with the manufacturer's handbook.

* The items marked with an asterisk should bear the chainsaw logo (see AFAG leaflet 301) and show the chain speed to which they have been tested.

- 15 Make sure the MEWP has an up-to-date record of thorough examination. MEWPs should be thoroughly examined every six months by a competent person, eg an insurance company engineer (see HSE Information Sheet AIS30 *LOLER: How the Regulations apply to arboriculture*).
- 16 **Never** allow anyone to ride in the platform while the vehicle is moving unless the machine is designed to be driven from the platform.
- 17 The safe working load (SWL) of the platform must be clearly marked and observed, taking into account tools and equipment.
- 18 Ensure any levelling indicators are clear and in working order and any 'out of level' alarms are functional.
- 19 Check the ground surface conditions. Wherever possible operate the platform on level ground and adjust the level, as necessary, according to the manufacturer's specification. Never work on gradients which exceed the manufacturer's specification. Always keep the work platform to the uphill side of the base vehicle even if the gradient is acceptable.
- 20 Position the vehicle to operate safely. Some types of MEWP may slew into the path of traffic, pedestrians or buildings when being operated. On all reasonably foreseeable approaches to the worksite, erect warning and prohibition signs conforming to the Health and Safety (Safety Signs and Signals) Regulations 1996, indicating a hazardous worksite and that unauthorised access is prohibited. In areas of very high public access, a risk assessment may indicate that additional controls (eg barrier tape, barriers, extra manning) are required.
- 21 Work must not start until all traffic-control measures are operating. Ensure, where applicable, that hazard warning lights and beacons are in operation at all times. Ground staff must wear high-visibility clothing when working on public roads or at other times where dictated by the risk assessment.
- 22 When fitted, stabilisers or outriggers **must** always be positioned before the platform is raised. Do not position stabilisers onto gratings, drains, manhole covers, voids or over excavations. Put stabilisers onto suitable spreader plates when required.
- 23 **Beware of overhead power lines.** (Consult the local electricity company when working within two tree lengths of energised overhead power lines.) Ensure that no cut part of the tree, the platform body, tools or equipment can encroach within 15 m of lines (see AFAG leaflet 804 *Electricity at work: Forestry and arboriculture*).
- 24 Do not use the platform when wind speeds exceed the manufacturer's recommendations, or where there is a risk of unplanned movements or platform overturn.
- 25 All platforms, eg knuckle-boom, scissor, or telescopic, must be operated according to the manufacturer's instructions.

Raising the platform