

MEWPS WORKING OVER WATER

Operating Mobile Elevating Work Platforms (MEWPS) on or near water presents additional hazards which must be identified and their risks managed by a competent person. The hazards associated with the water should be considered during the selection of work equipment for this type of work and a site specific safe work method statement must be prepared for working on or near water or if there is a risk of a person falling more than 2m.

Whether there is the greater risk of injury to the worker is from falling from height off the working platform or from drowning if the worker or the platform falls into the water needs to be determined for each specific site.

If there is a greater risk of drowning then appropriate life jackets / personal flotation devices should be worn and any risk from fall from height should be controlled by means other than the use of harnesses. Both harnesses and floatation devices may be used by the operator. They should not be used simultaneously and when each type is worn should be decided to suit the site conditions.

If harnesses need to be worn for other reasons (e.g. movement/work elsewhere or to aid rescue/recovery) the occupant should not be connected to the MEWP whilst activities near to or over water are taking place. As soon as the MEWP moves away from such areas the occupant should connect him/herself to the attachment point. In these circumstances the standard of instruction and supervision should be such that inappropriate work activity that might lead to a person falling from the basket or the MEWP overturning is avoided

Take all possible steps to prevent a fall first then control the risks from the fall.



Working on a Barge or Pontoon

Hazards

- Weather conditions (i.e. wind and rain)
- Structure of the barge failing due to over loading
- MEWP tipping over while being moved to the barge.
- Tipping the barge MEWP combination
- MEWP travelling over the edge of the barge
- Operator falling into water and not being able to remove harness and return to the surface

Possible Risk Control Measures

- Use a spotter, where necessary
- Ensure the barge is capable of supporting the weight of the MEWP, moving loads, and point loads from wheels, for example
- Ensure the barge is capable of maintaining its surface with the maximum safe inclination for all working positions of the MEWP.
- Disable MEWP drive function, where possible
- Secure the MEWP to barge using suitable chains if travelling on the barge is not required
- Consider locating a rescue boat in the vicinity, outside the zone where objects can fall
- Place life buoys in easily accessible locations

Safe Work Method Statement Should Include

- Communication method between the spotter and the operator
- When to wear the harness or the floatation device
- Travel at creep speed to set up the MEWP on the barge
- Plan to rescue a person fallen into water
- Plan to retrieve a person in the basket

Information regarding the amount of list and freeboard allowable for MEWP's mounted on water-borne craft under both safe working load (SWL) and overload conditions should be obtained from a competent person or authority experienced in MEWP design and stability of water-borne craft.



Working from an Embankment

Hazards

- MEWP tipping into water
- Depth, tide changes, water flow and floods
- Weather conditions (i.e. wind and rain)
- Operator falling into water and not being able to remove harness and come to the surface
- Water flow changing the ground conditions including washing the surface around the wheels and outrigger jacks



Possible Risk Control Measures

- Trained operators/spotters.
- Always set up on a firm level surface.
- Check the ground conditions including embankments or river beds are suitable for the MEWP selected for use (provide larger packing under outrigger jacks to suit the ground conditions).
- Check ground conditions at regular intervals beneath machine whilst operating.
- Check outrigger feet/jack legs are centralised on spreader boards at regular intervals.
- Consideration should be given to wearing a harness whilst slewing over ground

Safe Work Method Statement Should Include

- How to monitor the ground conditions
- Travel slowly, over uneven ground and near structures
- Communication method between the spotter and the operator
- When to wear the harness or the floatation device
- Plan to rescue a person fallen into water
- Plan to retrieve a person on the basket

Please note the information provided is only a guide, ground conditions can vary from site to site. Great care must be taken when setting machines up as weather and ground conditions can change.

The person in control of the site should supply relevant information about the ground bearing capacity, terrain, gradient, base area, load bearing capability of supporting structures and any localised ground features, such as trenches, manholes and uncompacted backfill, which could lead to overturning.

The EWPA recommends contacting State Regulators before commencing this type of work.