

Alert!

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Elevated work platform (EWP) – RF causes controls to malfunction

Background

An incident occurred where a hired elevated work platform's electric controls malfunctioned due to EMI (electromagnetic interference) from nearby mobile base station antennas. EMI can also occur near other strong electromagnetic fields (EMFs), for example broadcasting towers, high voltage towers.



The malfunction occurred at RF field levels well below the occupational exposure limit so Radman personal RF monitors will not provide a pre warning of a potential malfunction.

Current Telstra Fleet leased items are not impacted by EMI as they utilise hydraulic controls.

Actions

Managers of employees required to use EWPs near mobiles base stations or broadcast facilities.

1. Check with the Hire Company whether the equipment has EMI shielding on electric controls and has emergency hydraulic controls. Units with mechanical (hydraulic) controls are not impacted.
2. Where the equipment may be impacted by EMI (where in doubt, assume equipment is impacted), ensure:
 - a. For radio sites, as much as possible that work is not undertaken inside strong EMFs by either
 - shutting-down or powering-down the RF transmitter for the relevant antenna sector; or
 - positioning away from the RF field (for example, work in areas under the public exposure limit for radio-frequency radiation, i.e., outside the yellow zone on radiation hazard drawings.
 - b. all team members can operate emergency controls to facilitate rescue in the event of failure of the controller.

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