



Mines Safety Bulletin No. 116

Subject: Use of mobile elevated work platforms (MEWPs) within or adjacent to structures with restricted access

Date: 08 December 2014

Summary of hazard

Over the past 18 months, the Department of Mines and Petroleum has received dozens of incident reports involving the use of mobile elevated work platforms (MEWPs) within or adjacent to structures with restricted access. Most relate to construction activities.

MEWPs are being damaged and people injured due to basket placement in or adjacent to a structure with restricted access.

Incidents include:

- an employee attempting to manoeuvre into a steel structure was seriously injured when he became trapped between the MEWP control panel and framework
- all eight connecting bolts between a MEWP basket and rotator assembly sheared when the basket came into contact with a steel structure
- a MEWP basket knuckle was damaged when the basket became entangled in a steel structure while being withdrawn.



MEWPs being used in and near a structure with restricted access

Contributory factors

Using a MEWP in a restricted workplace increases the potential for entanglement or entrapment. Contributory factors identified in the reported incidents include:

- operators not being competent or not receiving machine-specific training, leading to:
 - incorrect operation of the MEWP
 - operator leaning over handrail or control panel
 - operator not allowing enough room for delays in response to hand control operation
 - operator not fully understanding the functions and response times of each control movement of the MEWP
- spotters not receiving competency-based training, leading to incorrect positioning to see and advise operators on hazards
- risk assessment not identifying potential for:
 - interaction with other work parties, leading to inadequate communication between parties
 - operator to be distracted
 - spotter being asked to conduct multiple tasks
 - view of work to be obscured, leading to inappropriate spotter positioning or insufficient spotters
- MEWPs not being maintained to original equipment manufacture (OEM) requirements, leading to loss of control of movement.



Spotter has obscured view of work being undertaken by MEWP operator and might not recognise potential for interaction with other activities

Actions required

Mine operators are reminded of the importance of undertaking risk assessments for work being undertaken using MEWPs. The emergency plan for work in restricted-access areas should include a suitable response to entrapment or entanglement within a structure.

When using a MEWP, the following measures are recommended:

- supervisors should
 - conduct a risk assessment that involves operators and spotters before starting a task
 - ensure operators and spotters are competent to conduct the task
 - where required, use more than one spotter for a specific task
- operators should
 - have a current high risk work licence for operating the MEWP
 - be assessed as competent for the type of MEWP to be used, as well as the work to be done and operating environment
 - conduct a pre-start check before a machine is operated to ensure it is responsive to control commands
 - keep all parts of their body within the confines of the MEWP basket while in operation
- spotters should
 - be in a position to see and advise on hazards
 - establish suitable communications with the MEWP operator and other work parties in the vicinity
 - not be distracted by doing other tasks while the MEWP is in use
- maintainers should
 - maintain each MEWP onsite to OEM requirements so it operates as expected.

Further information

Visit www.dmp.wa.gov.au/ResourcesSafety for information on occupational safety and health in the resources sector.

This Mines Safety Bulletin was approved for release by the State Mining Engineer on 08 December 2014