

# AFAG403

## Mobile elevating work platforms (MEWPs) for tree work

### 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 your risk assessment 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 site management on the HSE Treework webpages: [www.hse.gov.uk/treework/index.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/treework/index.htm)).

### General

A 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.

Identify the appropriate equipment, personal protective equipment (PPE) and number of operatives required.

Everyone must be fit to undertake the task. Report all problems that could affect performance to management.

Select the correct MEWP for the task. Consider the ground conditions, height and reach and the type of work to be done.

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.

Ensure all operations near to highways are adequately signed with the appropriate notices as specified in the Department for Transport's *Safety at street works and road works: A Code of Practice*.

Dangerous occurrences involving MEWPs must be reported to the Health and Safety Executive (see RIDDOR explained on HSE's webpages: [www.hse.gov.uk/riddor/index.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/riddor/index.htm)).

# Personal protective equipment (PPE)

While no PPE can provide 100% protection against cuts from chainsaws, workers using chainsaws should wear the following:

- A safety helmet (complying with either BS EN 397, with a suitable chinstrap, or BS EN 12492).
- Eye protection (a mesh visor complying with BS EN 1731 or safety glasses to BS EN 166).
- Hearing protection (complying with BS EN 352).
- Suitable gloves appropriate to the task and subject to the operator's risk assessment.
- Leg protection\* and groin protection (complying with BS EN 381-5): Type A or C.
- Protective boots\* with good grip and protective guarding at front vamp and instep (complying with BS EN ISO 20345).
- Non-snag outer clothing. The use of high-visibility clothing may also be appropriate.

Workers not using a chainsaw should wear the following:

- A safety helmet (complying with either BS EN 397, with a suitable chinstrap, or BS EN 12492).
- Protective boots with good grip and ankle support (complying with BS EN 345-1).
- Non-snag outer clothing. The use of high-visibility clothing may also be appropriate.
- Suitable work gloves.

Each person should carry a personal first-aid kit including a large wound dressing (see INDG214 *First aid at work: Your questions answered*).

All climbers should carry a suitable knife with a retractable blade.

Hand-cleaning material such as waterless skin cleanser or soap, water and paper towels should be readily available.

## Operators

Only trained and authorised people may operate the platform. Other people in the tree-work gang must be able to lower the platform, by using both the controls on it and any emergency controls on the platform mounting below. 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.

\* These should bear the chainsaw logo (see Treework webpages [www.hse.gov.uk/treework/safety-topics/chainsaw-operator.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/treework/safety-topics/chainsaw-operator.htm)) and show the chain speed to which they have been tested.

## Preparing to work

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.

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 safety topics on the Treework webpages).

Never allow anyone to ride in the platform while the vehicle is moving unless the machine is designed to be driven from the platform.

The safe working load (SWL) of the platform must be clearly marked and observed, taking into account tools and equipment.

Ensure any levelling indicators are clear and in working order and any 'out of level' alarms are functional.

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.

Position the vehicle to operate safely. Some types of MEWP may slew into the path of traffic, pedestrians or buildings when 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.

Do not start work until all traffic-control measures are operating. Ensure, where applicable, that hazard warning lights and beacons are in operation at all times. Ground staff should wear high-visibility clothing when working on public roads or at other times where dictated by the risk assessment.

When fitted, stabilisers or outriggers need to 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.

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 10m of lines (see site management on the Treework webpages).

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.

## Raising the platform

All platforms, eg knuckle-boom, scissor, or telescopic, should be operated according to the manufacturer's instructions.

## Working from the platform

Always keep both feet flat on the floor of the platform. Do not stand on the sides or guard rails to gain extra height.

Always keep your work-positioning system attached to the anchor point within the platform.

Keep the platform floor free of debris and never use it to lower timber.

Never position the platform under the branch to be pruned or removed. Make sure it is positioned at or above the level of the cut.

Do not attach ropes between the platform and any part of the tree. A MEWP is not intended to be used as a crane. Use an independent rope to lower offcuts.

If climbing from the platform into a tree, the climber should wear a harness suitable for tree climbing and be attached to the tree, on a tested anchor point, before releasing the anchorage on the platform (see AFAG401 *Tree-climbing operations*).

Operators should refer to INDG317 *Chainsaws at work* for guidance on the care, maintenance and use of the chainsaw.

Secure hand tools within the platform at all times.

## Lowering the platform

Lower the platform carefully to avoid any contact with the tree, and stow and lock the lower boom fully in the travel position.

Remove all debris, clean the platform and leave the site in a tidy and safe condition.

Fully retract and secure the stabilisers and switch off warning lights before moving off.

## Further reading

HSE Treework webpages [www.hse.gov.uk/treework/index.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/treework/index.htm)

*Safety at street works and road works: A Code of Practice* The Stationery Office 2001  
ISBN 978 0 1155 1958 1 [www.tsoshop.co.uk/](http://www.tsoshop.co.uk/)

RIDDOR explained [www.hse.gov.uk/riddor/index.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/riddor/index.htm)

*First aid at work: Your questions answered* Leaflet INDG214(rev1) HSE Books 2009  
[www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg214.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg214.htm)

*Safety signs and signals. The Health and Safety (Safety Signs and Signals) Regulations 1996. Guidance on Regulations L64* (Second edition) HSE Books 2009  
[www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/l64.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/l64.htm)

*Tree-climbing operations* Leaflet AFAG401(rev1) HSE Books 2013  
[www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/afag401.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/afag401.htm)

*Chainsaws at work* Leaflet INDG317(rev2) HSE Books 2012  
[www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg317.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg317.htm)

*Top-handled chainsaws* Leaflet AFAG308(rev2) HSE Books 2013  
[www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/afag308.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/afag308.htm)

*Aerial tree rescue* Leaflet AFAG402(rev1) HSE Books 2013  
[www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/afag402.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/afag402.htm)

*Avoidance of danger from overhead electric powerlines* GS6 HSE Books 1997  
[www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/g6.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/g6.htm)

## Further information

For information about health and safety, or to report inconsistencies or inaccuracies in this guidance, visit [www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk). You can view HSE guidance online and order priced publications from the website. HSE priced publications are also available from bookshops.

This guidance is issued by the Health and Safety Executive. Following the guidance is not compulsory, unless specifically stated, and you are free to take other action. But if you do follow the guidance you will normally be doing enough to comply with the law. Health and safety inspectors seek to secure compliance with the law and may refer to this guidance.

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