



Work at Heights

Contributor: Damien O'Connor, Irish Country Manager, IPAF

"Mobile Elevated Work Platforms (MEWPs) play a critical role in enabling safe work at height on construction sites. When used correctly, they offer a far safer alternative to ladders, particularly where scaffolding or permanent access isn't feasible. Their adaptability and mobility – for both indoor and outdoor use – makes them ideal for a wide range of applications. But it's vital they're supported by proper training, familiarisation, regular inspections, maintenance and adherence to safe working procedures."



(Damien O'Connor, Irish Country Manager, IPAF).

When using Work Platforms, Safety starts on the ground:

Mobile Elevated Work Platforms (MEWPs) offer a versatile and efficient alternative to traditional scaffolding, particularly for accessing hard-to-reach areas. MEWPs are generally categorised into scissor lifts, boom lifts (including telescopic and articulating/knuckle booms), static booms (vans, trucks, tracked) and vertical lifts, each designed for specific applications, carrying capacity, reach, and work environments.

When using MEWPs, safety assurance starts on the ground - improper planning and use of MEWPs has the potential to result in overturn incidents causing serious injuries or even fatalities. Instability leading to overturn is commonly among the top four causes of lost time incidents (LTIs) annually, according to global data. Overturn incidents may occur during setup, travel, or operation on inadequate or unsuitable ground or floor conditions.

Precautionary measures for safe operation of MEWPs include the following:

- ✓ 1. Assess Ground Conditions
- ✓ 2. Assess the Risks
- ✓ 3. Pre-Use Inspection
- ✓ 4. Have You Been Familiarised/Trained?
- ✓ 5. Avoid Crushing Hazards
- ✓ 6. Know the Rescue Plan

The legal provisions governing MEWPs are largely detailed in the following:

- Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005;
- Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (General Application) Regulations 2007 - particularly Chapter 2-Use of Work Equipment and Part 4-Work at Height);
- Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (Construction) Regulations 2013.

For Further Information:

IPAF - [IPAF - The International Powered Access Federation](https://www.ipaf.org/en-us/about-us)

- Assessment of Ground Conditions: <https://www.ipaf.org/en-us/resource-library/assessment-ground-conditions-and-supporting-structures-safe-use-mewps>

- Familiarisation training: <https://www.ipaf.org/en-us/resource-library/f1-familiarization-mobile-elevating-work-platforms-mewps>
- The Safe Use of MEWPs When Using Pedestrian Controls: <https://www.ipaf.org/en-us/resource-library/safe-use-mewps-when-using-pedestrian-controls>
- Guidance on Emergency Rescue: <https://www.ipaf.org/en-us/resource-library/guidance-emergency-rescue>

Health and Safety Authority:

- https://www.hsa.ie/eng/publications_and_forms/publications/construction/hsa_mewps_guidance