

## **IPAF : RESCUE OF PERSONS FROM MEWPS**

### **Introduction**

When MEWPs are used there is always the risk of persons in the work platform becoming stranded at height due to MEWP malfunction, breakdown or an outside influence. This risk can be significantly reduced through using well maintained equipment, conducting a pre-use inspection, including function checks and the MEWP being operated by a trained, competent operator. These factors will significantly reduce any potential risk. It is however, still essential that plans are put in place to rescue persons in the work platform.

NOTE: Whilst every care has been taken to ensure the accuracy of the material contained within this guidance, no liability is accepted by the authors in respect of the information given. Compliance with this guidance does not give automatic assurance of compliance with legislative requirements. It is the duty holders' responsibility to ensure they comply with the legal requirements relevant to safe work at height.

### **Responsibility for rescue**

In the case of a hired-in MEWP supplied with an operator, the responsibility for the rescue plan remains with the user. The employer of the operator or their nominated representative should check with the MEWP user to ensure that an adequate rescue plan has been put in place.

MEWP suppliers should be able to provide technical advice to assist with the planning process.

### **Rescue personnel**

This person should be familiar with the ground controls of the MEWP and have practiced lowering the platform. They should also have been fully briefed on the rescue plan and identified to the MEWP operator in the work platform as the nominated ground rescue person.

In the case of rescue being required, the MEWP operator should in the first instance alert their supervisor. If, however they are not contactable the operator should contact the nominated ground rescue person directly for assistance. It is essential that all personnel involved in the rescue have the necessary competence to enable the rescue to be carried out safely.

### **Communication**

Effective communication between the MEWP operator and their supervisor and/or nominated ground rescue person is essential if the rescue plan is to be carried out successfully. The means of communication chosen will depend on a number of factors including maximum working height of the MEWP, background noise, environment and mobile 'phone signal strength.

In areas with poor mobile 'phone signal strength it may be necessary to use hand-held radios. Information on radio communications for lifting operations is given in CPA Technical Information Note TIN 017

### **Means of rescue**

If the MEWP cannot be lowered, either by using the auxiliary power source or ground controls, it may be necessary to rescue the platform occupants using another MEWP to carry out a "basket to basket" transfer.

An alternative method that may be considered is the use of a mobile crane or tower crane with a suspended man-basket.

### **Use of the emergency services**

The rescue plan should not rely on the fire and rescue services to carry out the rescue of persons from a MEWP at height, as their capabilities vary from area to area and the MEWP may well have a much higher working height than any firefighting hydraulic platform or turntable ladder.

Where an occupant of the MEWP platform is injured or incapacitated the ambulance service should be called immediately.

### **Last resort**

If all other practical alternatives have been exhausted and rescue is still

essential, a controlled descent device might be considered as a "last resort" in exceptional circumstances.

The decision to use such a device should only be considered after a robust risk assessment shows that this is acceptable. Annex C lists some of the many risk factors that should be considered and managed before using any Controlled Descent Device. This list is not exhaustive and other hazards may be identified by a robust risk assessment.

Remember that people will not always react in the expected way. Discuss rescue plans prior to using the MEWPs.

Further information can be found on the IPAF website.