

SAFETY ALERT (ALT-002)

Mobile Elevating Work Platforms



BACKGROUND

A serious incident recently occurred on a construction site that involved a 'cherry picker' type of Mobile Elevating Work Platform (MEWP). In this instance, the MEWP overturned whilst its operator was within its 'basket'. The cause of the accident related specifically to the machine's centre of gravity and stability, which suddenly altered dramatically when an access chamber cover gave way beneath one wheel of the vehicle (see Figure A). Regrettably, the MEWP operative was working at a height of approximately 14m when the vehicle overturned and consequently, sustained serious injury as a result of the accident.



Figure A: Photo showing the collapsed access chamber cover, which caused the MEWP to overturn

PRACTICAL GUIDANCE

MAINTENANCE AND INSPECTION

MEWP operators should ensure that their vehicle has been appropriately maintained by a competent person. They should conduct a machine inspection at the start of each shift and keep an appropriate record of such. Operators must also ensure that the MEWP is suitable for the specific work task to be undertaken. Any maintenance or inspection undertaken should follow guidance as laid out by the Original Equipment Manufacturer - OEM. If an operator is in doubt about any aspect of machine maintenance or operation then they should speak to their supervisor.

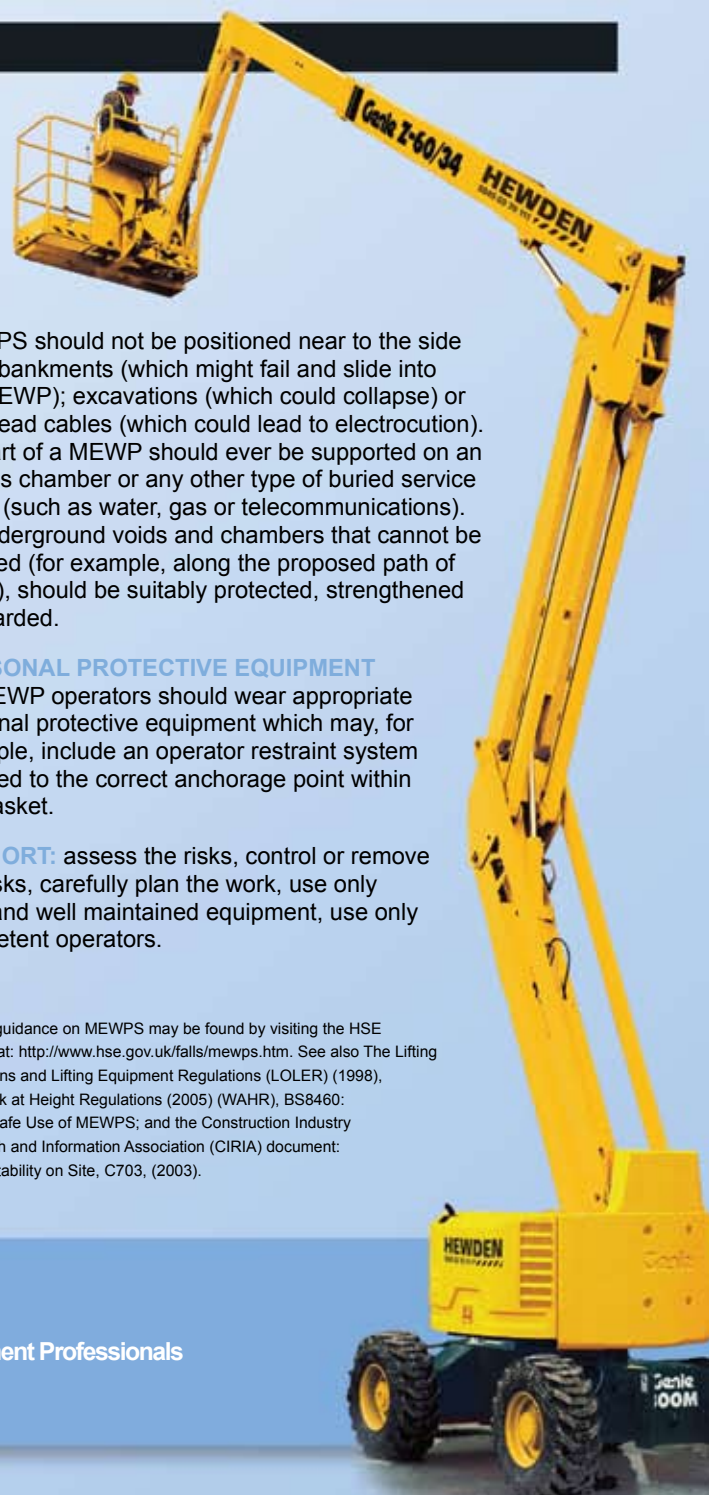
MACHINE STABILITY

Before operating the MEWP, the ground conditions must be checked, along both the proposed path of travel and the work area, to ensure that they are relatively level, reasonably flat and free from obstructions. Ground conditions should also be capable of supporting any combined loads imposed upon them, resulting from the MEWP, its operators and any materials or tools they will be carrying or using from the vehicle. The Safe Working Load of the MEWP should be determined and care taken to not exceed it.

When assessing ground conditions and machine stability, appropriate consideration should also be given to prevailing climatic conditions such as rain (which can affect the operator's ability to work safely) and wind speed (which can cause the MEWP to become unstable or in the extreme, overturn).

Before moving the MEWP, it is advisable that the boom is fully lowered to its rest position to ensure that the machine is more stable and that its centre of gravity is as low as possible. Outriggers should be extended and chocked as necessary before raising the basket.

Safety devices fitted to machines, such as level indicators, must be functional, active, and monitored at all times as per the OEM's instructions. In the event of an emergency or machine failure, operators and their supervisors should know how to lower the basket to the rest position and otherwise make the MEWP safe.



MEWPS should not be positioned near to the side of embankments (which might fail and slide into the MEWP); excavations (which could collapse) or overhead cables (which could lead to electrocution). No part of a MEWP should ever be supported on an access chamber or any other type of buried service cover (such as water, gas or telecommunications). All underground voids and chambers that cannot be avoided (for example, along the proposed path of travel), should be suitably protected, strengthened or guarded.

PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

All MEWP operators should wear appropriate personal protective equipment which may, for example, include an operator restraint system secured to the correct anchorage point within the basket.

IN SHORT: assess the risks, control or remove the risks, carefully plan the work, use only safe and well maintained equipment, use only competent operators.

Further guidance on MEWPS may be found by visiting the HSE website at: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/falls/mewps.htm>. See also The Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations (LOLER) (1998), The Work at Height Regulations (2005) (WAHR), BS8460: (2005) Safe Use of MEWPS; and the Construction Industry Research and Information Association (CIRIA) document: Crane Stability on Site, C703, (2003).

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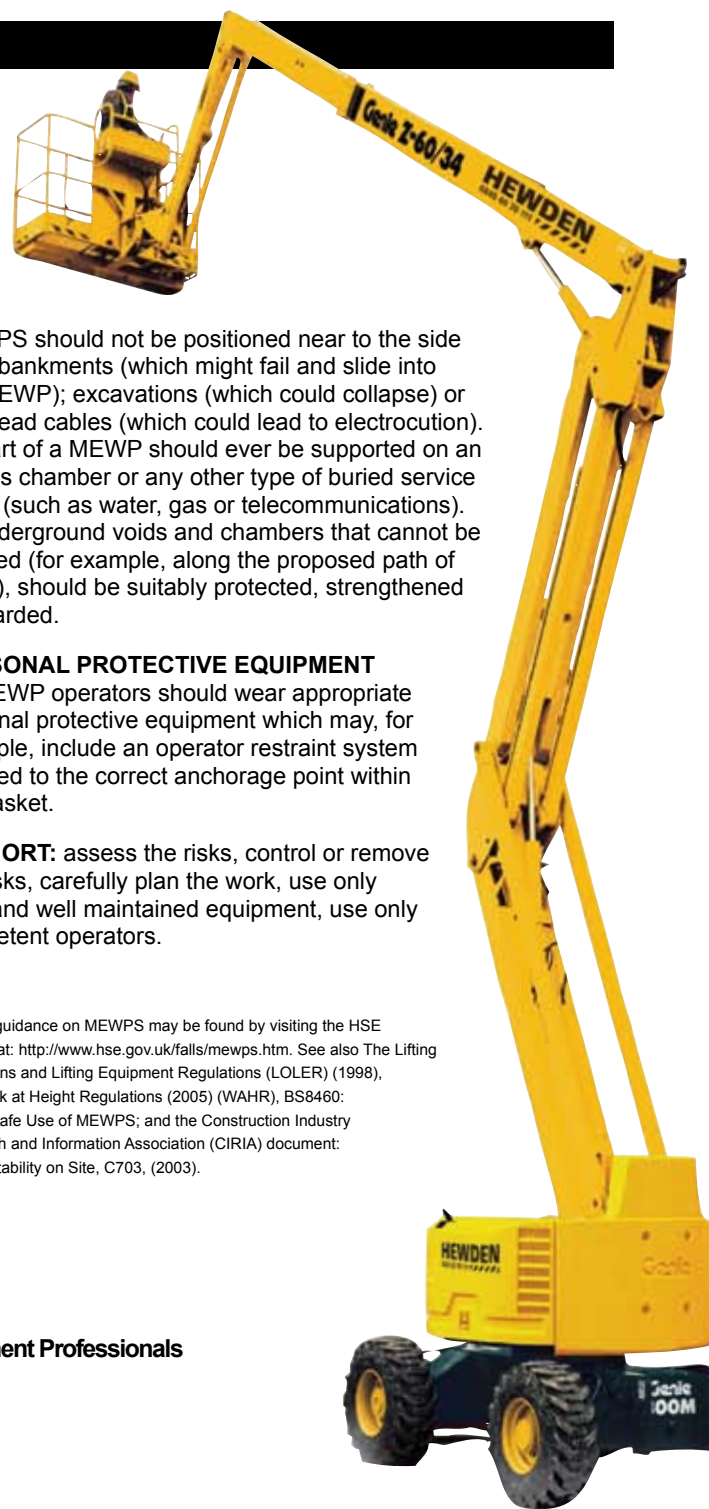
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