

DANGER OF CRUSHING IN ELEVATED WORK PLATFORMS



This alert has been generated to ensure that all sites in Australia are aware of the risks associated with the danger to workers of being crushed against structures, while manoeuvring raised mobile elevated work platforms (EWPs) and scissor lifts in, around or near fixed structures.

BACKGROUND

There have been a number of incidents in Australia and internationally where workers have been crushed against fixed structures while manoeuvring raised boom and scissor-type EWPs. On 20 February 2016, such an incident resulted in the death of a worker at the Royal Adelaide Children's Hospital.

ISSUES

EWPs and scissor lifts have become the default height access equipment for many trades and tasks. While they may control work at height risks, they have introduced new risks associated with the movement of powered mobile plant.

Duty holders are usually aware of the risks to persons on the ground, but they often don't consider the movement risks to workers on the EWP platform, or in the basket. The range of motions available on some modern EWPs (for example some have the ability to manoeuvre into and between structures) has increased crush risks.

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Currently, duty holders typically rely on low-order (administrative) controls to manage crush risks. These include work instructions, operator skill and situation awareness.

A number of EWP manufacturers and suppliers have started developing and introducing various types of engineering controls (called secondary guarding) to reduce the likelihood of crush incidents occurring.

However, secondary guarding is not widely fitted to the EWP rental fleet so guarded EWPs may not be readily available.

Furthermore, the first generation of the secondary guarding systems now available, do not eliminate the crush risk but may reduce the risk on some tasks.

RECOMMENDED CONTROLS

Prior to operating an EWP in, around, or near fixed structures, duty holders must ensure the crush risks are eliminated. If it is not reasonably practicable to eliminate the risk, the risks must be reduced so far as is reasonably practicable.

Eliminate the risk by doing the task, or part of the task, on the ground or from a solid structure (for example paint steel beams on the ground so only touch-up is required from the EWP) to eliminate the need to use an EWP for the entire task.

If the risk cannot be eliminated, or partially eliminated, the remaining risk must be reduced so far as is reasonably practicable by:

- **Substitution** – Can the task be done from a different type of work platform which reduces the need for or the ability of the EWP to manoeuvre around fixed structures? For example, can a large platform scissor lift or fixed scaffold be used;

- **Engineering controls** – Can an EWP with a secondary guarding system be accessed for the task? This may require advance notice to the hirer; or
- **A combination** of the above.

If not reasonably practicable to use substitution or engineering controls, the risks must be reduced with lower order (administrative) controls, such as work procedures, training, emergency procedures, the use of a safety observer (who is trained to use EWP ground controls), plant familiarisation and supervision.

Note; Administrative controls will also be required to support substitution and engineering controls.

SAFE WORK METHOD STATEMENT (SWMS)

When operating powered mobile plants to undertake construction work, a SWMS must be developed and followed if there is a risk to a person from the movement of the plant.

This includes risks to persons in the EWP and the measures to control the crushing risks must be documented in the SWMS>

Note; SWMS must also address all high-risk construction work (for example, falls or demolition) involved with the use of the EWP.

For further information, contact your designated Health & Safety representative or your local organiser.