

SAF/10/025

14 December 2010

Safety Alert

Incident Involving MEWP Fire

An incident occurred on one of our projects when a concrete finisher was working from a MEWP that caught fire.

The operator was working at an approximate height of 5m when the fire started on the engine side of the 'base unit'. Other operatives noticed the fire and attracted the operator's attention who immediately started to lower the basket. After lowering the basket approximately 2m, the MEWP cut out and the operator was unable to bring it down on auxiliary power, (most likely because the battery was badly damaged by the fire). The fire also meant that no one could reach the emergency descent controls.

Left with little choice, the operator climbed over the guardrails and dropped to the ground – a distance of approximately 1.5m. He was not hurt.



Key Issues

The incident is still under investigation (awaiting a specialist fire investigator's report) however the following key issues were found:

1. The MEWP was defective in so much that it seems probable there was a leak of fuel or oil in the engine compartment. **PLEASE NOTE: 'NO' daily plant inspection form was completed for the MEWP nor had one been completed previously.**
2. The Risk Assessment stated that a designated ground man must be in place during all operations of a cherry picker. This wasn't implemented and so the detection of the fire and subsequent rescue of the operator was delayed.

Response required	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
BMS will be amended	<input type="checkbox"/>
For information only	<input type="checkbox"/>

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Display Until: 14th January 2011

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The main implication of this incident is the safety of the occupants in a MEWP basket should a base unit catch fire in the future. If the occupant was higher in the air, or perhaps working over water for example, the outcome could have been very different. The recommendations are therefore to prevent a reoccurrence of this incident rather than address evacuation procedures.



Actions Required

Please could all projects check MEWP operations to verify:

1. All elements of the risk assessments for working at height are being implemented – and if circumstances require a Ground Man to be deployed, that this person is adequately trained.
2. A dry powder fire extinguisher is available in case of an emergency.
3. Daily inspections are completed for all MEWPs including those operated by sub-contractors.
4. A plan for carrying out an emergency rescue is in place and tested regularly.

Response required	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
BMS will be amended	<input type="checkbox"/>
For information only	<input type="checkbox"/>

Iain Wilson
SSRA Director