

SPOT THE SAFETY VIOLATION: 12 Tips for Safe Use of Elevated Platforms



It is really safe for this worker to be standing where he is instead of inside the bucket or basket?

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Elevated work platforms let workers safely reach otherwise inaccessible areas or equipment. But if workers don't use these platforms correctly, they may put themselves at great risk of serious injury—if not worse.

This picture from [WorkSafe Victoria](#) in Australia illustrates one unsafe work practice involving elevated work platforms: workers climbing out of the buckets or baskets. If the chosen elevated work platform wasn't high enough or in the proper position for the worker to access the top of the street light, the worker should've either repositioned the basket or used different equipment. (For example, the second elevated platform on the left side of the picture seems perfectly positioned to give access to that area.)

Instead, the worker chose to climb out of the bucket and stand on its edge while working on the street light. And although it's hard to tell, it doesn't appear that he's wearing fall protection while in this precarious position, further adding to the safety risks.

12 Tips for Safe Use of Elevated Platforms

The OHS regulations spell out requirements for the safe use of elevating work platforms, such as boom and scissor lifts. Of course, you should always check the specific requirements in your jurisdiction and comply with them. But here are some general safety tips for this equipment:

1. Ensure that workers who operate elevated work platforms are properly trained in the safe use of the equipment to ensure that they're competent. (For information on who qualifies as a "competent person," see "[Compliance 101: What Makes a Worker a 'Competent Person' under OHS Laws?](#)")
2. Maintain elevated platforms in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. To do so, inspect the equipment prior to its use each day. You can use this [elevating work platform inspection checklist](#).
3. Identify all overhead dangers, such as joists, beams and power lines, and eliminate, control or otherwise address them *before* the start of work. For example, maintain a minimum clearance of at least three meters from any overhead lines. And always treat [power lines](#), wires and other conductors as energized, even if they're down or appear to be insulated.
4. Make sure workers adequately secure objects, materials or tools with the potential of falling from the platform.
5. Don't exceed the load limits of the equipment, taking into account the combined weight of the worker(s), tools and materials.
6. Ensure workers enter or exit elevated platforms in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.

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7. Never move the equipment with workers in an elevated platform unless it's permitted by the manufacturer. And when moving platforms, ensure the travel path is clear of all hazards, such as holes, bumps, debris or any other potential obstructions.
8. Ensure workers use [appropriate fall protection](#), such as a body harness or restraining belt with a lanyard attached to the platform, to prevent them from falling out of or being ejected or pulled from the platform.
9. Instruct workers not to climb out of the basket/platform and stand on its edge, the guardrail, etc.
10. Don't use elevated platforms in extreme weather conditions—especially high winds—unless measures are in place to ensure their safe use. Check the manufacturer's recommendations as to use of the equipment in windy conditions.
11. Operate platforms on firm, level surfaces capable of withstanding the weight and all forces applied by the machine, taking into account unseen hazards such as underground vaults, storage tanks, etc. Lock or block the wheels when parked on inclined surfaces.
12. When operating elevated platforms in areas of vehicular traffic, such as in this picture, use proper warning signs and flaggers or traffic control workers. (Learn about [traffic control plans](#).)

Download this [model safe work procedure for powered aerial work platforms](#) and adapt it for your workplace, OHS program and your jurisdiction's OHS laws as they relate to such equipment. And at [SafetySmart.com](#), you can get a [safety talk handout on aerial lifts](#).

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