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Aerial Platform Safety

Jobsite are not always at ground level. Sometimes, workers need to use aerial platforms, aerial ladders, articulating boom platforms, vertical towers, or ladder trucks to reach their work. All work has hazards and risks involved in it, but when you work at an elevated height, extra training and attention to safety procedures is a necessity.

In order to work safely with aerial platforms, get training on the operating procedures for your job site and task. Get specialized training on each aerial lift model you will use. Know the risks and hazards involved with aerial work, including your own risk of falling and the hazard of dropping objects on to coworkers below. Learn to tether your tools and equipment and ensure that coworkers underneath the platform are wearing hard hats.

Formal inspections and maintenance of aerial platforms should be scheduled based on the environment and how often the machine is used. Before performing maintenance on an aerial platform, lower it to the full down position. Switch all of the controls to the off position. Apply the brakes and/or use chock blocks. Lock out the power and bleed the hydraulic lines. Never modify or alter your aerial platform without written permission from the manufacturer because changes could alter the structure and stability. Never operate the aerial platform from a scaffold or trailer without written permission from the manufacturer.

In addition to regular inspections and maintenance, inspect the platform each time you use it. Look for proper function of the controls. Make sure that the emergency lowering mechanism works. Watch for wear and tear. Check for proper fluid levels and no leaks. Never use the equipment if it is not working properly. Tag it out of service until it can be repaired.

When you are planning your work, first ensure that the platform is appropriate to the task. Make sure that loads are within the capacity limit and are stowed properly for stability. Always use the outriggers and stabilizers required for the aerial platform and check for uneven surfaces and debris in the work area. Look for overhead obstructions and electrical lines. Avoid using aerial platforms outside in bad weather and high winds. Don't use an aerial platform if it has to be stabilized against another building or object. Never use your aerial platform as a crane.

Before working on an aerial platform, put on the appropriate fall protection gear. Consider a fall limiter so that you do not fall too far off of the platform. Make sure that guardrails are installed and access gates are closed before you raise the platform. Keep both feet on the platform at all times and do not reach too far out. Do not use lumber or ladders to get additional height on the platform. Do not step on guardrails or gate rungs and do not climb out of the platforms for any reason. If you will travel with aerial platform, go slowly in order to watch for overhead hazards and people below.

Content Source: Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) (Users of Safety Talk are advised to determine the suitability of the information as it applies to local situations and work practices and its conformance with applicable laws and regulations).

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