

RISK CONTROL CONSULTING

Aerial Platform Safety

Jobsites are not always at ground level. Sometimes, employees 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 must be at an elevated height, extra training and attention to safety procedures is a necessity. According to OSHA, the most injuries and fatalities are the result of the employer not addressing fall protection, stabilization and positioning.

In order to work safely with aerial platforms, follow these key best practices:

- Receive training on the operating procedures for your job site and task. This includes:
 - operating lift vertically and while in transit,
 - how to handle materials on the lift;
 - other worksite hazards the employee may encounter when working on the equipment
 - Reporting equipment defects or maintenance needs
- Obtain specialized training on each aerial lift model you will use from a competent person.
- Know the risks and hazards involved with aerial work, including your own risk of falling, tip-overs, electrical shock, contact with ceilings and other overhead objects, and the hazard of dropping objects on to co-workers below.
- Learn to tether your tools and equipment and ensure that coworkers underneath the platform are wearing hard hats.
- Avoid using aerial platforms outside in bad weather and high winds.
- 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.



Planning Ahead

Proper planning is paramount when working with any equipment. When planning elevated work, consider these questions prior to operation:

- Is the platform appropriate to the task?
- Is the equipment in good working condition with proper maintenance?
- Are loads within the capacity limit and stored properly for stability?
- Are there uneven surfaces and debris in the work area?
- Are there overhead obstructions and electrical lines?
- Is there sufficient space for the aerial platform?

Maintenance/Inspections

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Formal maintenance of aerial platforms should be scheduled based on the environment and the manufacturer's recommendation. Inspections should be conducted prior to the beginning of each shift.

1. Test and inspect controls and components before each use.
2. Ensure the guardrail systems are in good working condition
3. Verify that brakes once set will hold the scissor lift in position.

In addition to regular inspections and maintenance, inspect the platform each time before 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 ensure there are no leaks. Never use equipment if it is not working properly. Tag it out of service until it can be repaired.

Stabilization

Employers must ensure that lifts are stable and will not tip over or collapse. Follow these safe work practices:

- Follow the manufacturer's instructions for safe movement.
- Isolate the lift or implement traffic control measures to ensure that other equipment cannot contact with it.
- Use only in locations with firm, level surfaces away from hazards that can cause instability (drop offs, holes, slopes, bumps, obstructions)
- Use outdoors only when wind speeds are below recommended levels (generally 28 miles per hour).
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Fall Protection

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. Other considerations include:

- Ensuring guardrails are in place and access gates are closed before you raise the platform.
- Keep both feet on the platform at all times and do not extend your reach too far.
- 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 platform for any reason.
- If you will travel with the aerial platform, go slowly and use a co-worker to watch for overhead hazards and people on the ground.

Additional Resources:

Scissor Lifts – OSHA's Scaffolding Standard

<https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/etools/scaffolding/index.html>

Working Safely with Scissor Lifts – OSHA

<https://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA3842.pdf>

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This Tribal First Risk Control Consulting fact sheet is not intended to be exhaustive. The discussion and best practices suggested herein should not be regarded as legal advice. Readers should pursue legal counsel or contact their insurance providers to gain more exhaustive advice. For more information on this topic, please contact Tribal First Risk Control Consulting at (888) 737-4752 or riskcontrol@tribalfirst.com.

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