Significant Incident Summary No. 11

All-terrain elevating work platform (EWP) incident

Background

In 2024, a worker was injured in a serious incident involving a self-propelled, all-terrain elevating work platform (EWP) while carrying out tree maintenance on a suburban footpath.

The worker was operating the EWP from within the basket. While manoeuvring around the tree canopy with the boom fully extended, the dual front wheel of the EWP veered off the kerb and onto the road surface. The resulting instability caused the EWP to tip over onto its left side.

The basket containing the worker fell approximately six metres, struck a parked vehicle, and landed on a verge across the road. The worker sustained spinal injuries and multiple fractures.

Contributory factors

WorkSafe's investigation into the incident identified that:

- workers were not provided with adequate instruction and sufficient information in accordance with the manufacturer's operating manual
- the wheelbase of the EWP was not fully extended due to incorrect setup, compromising its stability
- the ground slope limits were not assessed prior to commencing work
- insufficient water ballast may have increased the risk of the EWP tipping.

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Recommendations

A person with management or control of an EWP at a workplace must manage the associated risks to health and safety, including the risk of an EWP overturning. This includes taking all reasonable steps to ensure the EWP's safety features (e.g. warning devices) are used in accordance with training, information and instruction provided to workers.

To minimise the risk of similar incidents when working with EWPs, it is recommended that:

- operators conduct pre-operational checks using manufacturer-supplied checklists or manuals, including checks to ensure the safe working load of the basket is not exceeded
- operators are deemed competent for the set-up and use of the specific EWP model in use (as operator controls can vary significantly between models); refer to the manufacturer's competency instructions
- operators have completed an EWP training course delivered by a registered training organisation
- for an EWP with a boom length of 11 metres or more, the operator has a high risk work licence
- EWPs are operated on level and stable ground with the drive wheel in the fully extended position so the basket can be safely elevated to its maximum height
- EWPs are fitted with slope indicators and the slope limit of the ground is measured prior to operation to ensure the manufacturer's maximum safe gradient is not exceeded
- EWPs are fitted with audible alarm indicators that sound when the boom is extended to two-thirds of its maximum height, and when the EWP is being operated too fast for the slope or near its maximum slope limits
- EWPs are operated in slow mode when manoeuvring around tree canopies, when the boom is extended to more than a quarter of its maximum height, and when the EWP is being driven within half of its maximum slope capacity
- A spotter is used whenever risk controls rely upon continuous observation and timely warning, for example where overhead powerlines are present, space to move is tight, there is pedestrian or vehicle traffic, or there are overhead structures or objects.

References and further information

WorkSafe

- *Managing risks of plant in the workplace*: Code of practice
- High risk work licensing

Safe Work Australia

- Elevating work platforms