

Spot The Safety Violation: Stay Safe on Aerial Work Platforms



These workers were smart to use an aerial work platform but committed a few other safety infractions. What are they'



Aerial or elevating work platforms are very useful pieces of equipment that can give workers safe access to otherwise hard-to-reach areas. But if used improperly, such platforms can pose their own hazards'some deadly. For example, according to the International Powered Access Federation (IPAF), there were 28 fatalities worldwide involving elevating work platforms in the first half of 2013.

In this picture, which a [passer-by in the UK took](#) and sent to the Health & Safety Executive (the OHS regulator), the workers were correct to use an aerial work platform for this work. But the one worker shouldn't be balancing on the side rail of the platform. These rails aren't meant to be stood on'they're intended to keep workers from falling off the platform.

In addition, neither worker on the platform seems to be using any form of fall protection equipment. And falls from such platforms are one of the most common causes of fatalities.

For example, the IPAF reports that the main causes of the 28 fatalities involving aerial work platforms in the first half

of this year were:

- Overturning of the platform (10);
- Falls from height (9);
- Entrapment (5);
- Electrocution (3); and
- Impact with the platform (1).

Of these platform-related fatalities:

- 13 occurred in the US
- Two each happened in France, Germany, the Netherlands and the UK
- One each in occurred in Armenia, Canada, Ireland, Malaysia, Norway, Spain and the UAE.

10 Aerial Work Platform Safe Work Practices

The OHS laws include requirements for the use of elevated work platforms. So you should check such requirements in your jurisdiction and comply with them. But here are some general safe work practices for this equipment:

1. Ensure that workers who operate aerial work platforms are properly trained in the safe use of the equipment.
2. Maintain and operate elevating work platforms in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.
3. Never override hydraulic, mechanical or electrical safety devices.
4. Never move the equipment with workers in an elevated platform unless it's permitted by the manufacturer.
5. Don't allow workers to position themselves between overhead hazards, such as joists and beams, and the rails of the platform because movement of the platform could crush them.
6. Maintain a minimum clearance of at least three meters from any overhead lines.
7. Always treat power lines, wires and other conductors as energized, even if they're down or appear to be

insulated.

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 or being ejected or pulled from the platform.
9. Set the brakes and use wheel chocks when using the platform on an incline.
10. Don't exceed the load limits of the equipment. Allow for the combined weight of the worker, tools and materials.

Download this [model safe work procedure for powered aerial work platforms](#) and adapt it for your workplace, OHS program and your jurisdiction's OHS regulations.