

Safe Use of Orchard Elevating Work Platforms – April 2010



Powerladders produced by edp Australia have helped growers improve efficiency and reduce the risk of injury in orchards for over 30 years. Powerladders are known more formally as Mobile Elevating Work Platforms (MEWPs).

The obligation of management and users of MEWPs to maintain a safe workplace is detailed in the Workplace Health and Safety legislation for each State. The Australian Standard, AS 2550.10 - 2006 was developed by industry stakeholders to set out guidelines for safe use of MEWPs to meet the requirements of the legislation. Regular inspection of MEWPs to ensure ongoing safe operation is central to the requirements.

As a leader in the ongoing development of safe orchard platforms, edp offers a summary of the minimum requirements for inspection of MEWPs as set out in AS 2550.10 – 2006:

1. Inspection before start of work

This inspection includes a visual inspection and functional test of the operating and safety devices of the MEWP. It is normally carried out by the operator before start of work. The inspection list should be documented, signed off by the operator, and filed in the log book. Defective items are to be reported and rectified before start of work. The following items should be included in the inspection list:

- No loose or missing parts (including wiring harness)
- No obvious structural defects, damage, cracks, corrosion
- Safety rails and the gate on the platform are operational
- Tyres are inflated correctly and all wheel nuts are in place
- No air, hydraulic, or fuel leaks
- Placards and warning labels are in place
- Controls on the platform are functional
- Emergency lowering system is operational
- Personal protective equipment and fall-arrest harness (if required) is in place
- Brakes are effective
- Safety switches and interlocks operate correctly

Operators must be trained to carry out the inspection competently.

2. Routine Inspection

A routine inspection of the MEWP is to be completed by a competent person at maximum 3 month intervals while the MEWP remains in service. This inspection includes a review of the 'before start of work' inspection records to identify items that may require specific attention. The inspection would normally be carried out in conjunction with specific checks and lubrication requirements specified in the maintenance manual. The MEWP must not be returned to service until critical faults have been rectified. A service report must be completed and filed in the log book.

3. Periodic Inspection

The periodic inspection includes items noted in the routine inspection plus additional items noted by the manufacturer in the maintenance manual. A competent person is required to review the log book to identify items that require particular attention. These items should be included in the maintenance program for subsequent periodic inspections.

The inspection and associated maintenance could be carried out pre-harvest. The MEWP must not be returned to service until critical faults have been rectified.

4. Major Inspection and Enhanced Periodic Inspection

A Major Inspection is required to be completed before the MEWP has been in service 10 years. This inspection and associated maintenance may be scheduled to start following the 5th year for completion before the 10th year of operation. The Major Inspection is again required before each subsequent 5 years service is completed.

A Major Inspection shall involve all those critical components identified by the manufacturer or competent person. Where necessary the MEWP shall be stripped down and paint and grease removed to allow a complete and thorough inspection.

When planning a Major Inspection, due consideration should be given to:

- The past service life, and current condition,
- Whether the MEWP can be upgraded to current AS 1418.10 requirements or latest specification,
- Maintenance records to identify evidence of repeated failures which need corrective action.

The Major Inspection shall pay attention to the operation of all operating and safety systems. All critical areas shall be examined by non-destructive testing techniques for evidence of fatigue cracking. An inspection report shall be prepared by the competent person. Maintenance necessary to ensure continued safe operation shall be identified including items that require particular attention in subsequent inspections.

The MEWP shall not be returned to service until all safety related issues have been corrected.

5. Manufacturer's Records

The maintenance manuals for Orchard MEWPs may not include the requirement for the Major Inspection or a detailed inspection program. This is often due to lack of service history at the time of manufacture. By the time the Major Inspection is due manufacturers have more detailed knowledge of service history and can identify areas that require attention at the Major Inspection.

edp Australia has detailed knowledge of performance of all Powerladder models and offers to share this knowledge with owners or service organizations formulating a Major Inspection of a Powerladder. Please contact edp Australia by phone on 035820 5337

Note - The information above is a summary of the requirements of Australian Standard AS 2550.10 in relation to inspection of MEWPs. Those planning inspection or maintenance of MEWPs should consult AS 2550.10 and not rely on this summary. Standards are available on-line from Standards Australia.