

8/25/2025 TBT - Aerial Work Platforms

Toolbox Talk - 8-25-2025 - Aerial Work Platforms

Manlifts and scissor lifts are two pieces of equipment that many workers can't imagine working without. This equipment, if used correctly, provides quick and safe access to work areas that at one time could only be reached from scaffolding or a crane's man basket. These lifts, collectively called Aerial Work Platforms, are important tools. But as with any tool, there are right and wrong ways to use them safely.

The most important tip to remember before operating any aerial lift platform is always read and follow the manufacturer's safety and operation manual! This information must be kept on the rig.

Safe Operating Procedures for Both Manlifts and Scissor Lifts:

- Only trained and authorized people should operate the lift. A qualified instructor must make sure that every operator reads and/or understands the equipment's safety and operating instructions. This includes all the warning decals and labels mounted on the machine.
- Always check for overhead obstructions before driving or elevating the platform.
- Refuel tanks only when the unit is turned off. If battery powered, the batteries should be charged only in a well-ventilated area, away from any open flame.
- Prior to each shift a safety inspection should be completed by the operator; this includes both a visual inspection and a function test. If a problem is found, get the lift repaired.
- Elevate the platform only when it is on a firm, level surface. Although many lifts look like a rough terrain piece of equipment, they are not. Their large tires do allow the equipment to access somewhat difficult areas, but once in position they are designed to be out of level only 5 degrees while in operation. This amounts to 10 inches in a 10 foot wheel span. In addition, the lift must have a tilt alarm that activates when the machine is more than 5 degrees out of level.

Scissor lifts are efficient one-direction lifts. They provide a solid surface to work from, but always remember:

- Guardrail, midrails and toe boards must be in place. The toe board can be omitted at the door.

- The platform must be equipped with a mechanical parking brake that will hold the unit securely on any slope it is capable of climbing. The brake should be tested periodically.
- Never use the lift's rails, planks across the rails, or a ladder, to gain additional height.

Unique hazards for manlifts: Manlifts can move in more than a single direction, increasing the risk of mishaps, so it's important to remember the following:

- Whenever working out of a manlift, a full body harness must be worn and properly attached to the basket. A sudden jolt has thrown people from manlifts, before they could react.
- Always maintain a safe distance from debris piles, drop-offs, floor openings, etc.
- Never drive the manlift when it is elevated above the limit the manufacturer considers safe. Each piece of equipment will state what the maximum extension can be while being driven.

Used correctly, aerial work platforms can be priceless, timesaving assets. Operate them without regard to their limitations, and this same equipment will put you and those around you at undue risk.

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