

## ESH Safety Alert

### Guidelines for Responsibilities of a Spotter (aka Ground Observer or Attendant) When Operating an Aerial Lift or Mobile Elevated Work Platform (MEWP)

Because MEWPs are considered heavy equipment, the hazards associated with its operation necessitate the use of a spotter and may not be operated solo. The spotter plays a critical role in ensuring the safety of both the operator and others in the area. This safety alert intends to provide clarification on their responsibilities.

#### Primary Responsibilities of Spotter

- **Identify and control hazards in the working area:** for example, coordinate pedestrians and site traffic with MEWP operations, ground conditions/safety of travel path, wind speed, or the proximity of obstructions, overhead hazards, etc.
- **Guide movement of lift operator:** the driver, when at height, may have difficulty assessing the distances of obstacles from the machine or may have blind spots.
- **Respond to an emergency:** the observer is responsible for activating the emergency descent device from the lower control box. The spotter must also alert the rescue services, if necessary. ([Refer to MEWP Rescue Plan](#))

#### General Requirements:

- The spotter must remain on the ground – they cannot effectively perform their duties if they are on the platform with the operator/worker.
- The operator must verbally communicate their intent to drive, maneuver, ascend, or descend the lift to the spotter prior to performing any operation. The operator may not perform any motion (driving or ascend/descend) without the clear acknowledgement and signaling/instruction of spotter after the spotter has ensured it is safe to do so.
- When the lift is performing any type of motion, the spotter must give their undivided attention to the operator and the worksite conditions and may not perform any other tasks outside of the primary responsibilities.
- When the lift is occupied but in a stationary/working position, the spotter may perform other tasks but must remain in close enough proximity to be able to verbally communicate with the operator in the event of an emergency or if an operator communicates their intent to move/operate the lift.

For additional information or questions on MEWP operation, contact ESH at [esh@umbc.edu](mailto:esh@umbc.edu).