

BUYING PRE-OWNED MEWPS IN NEW ZEALAND

INTRODUCTION

There is no doubt that the new Best Practice Guide (BPG) has changed the landscape for buying and importing secondhand MEWP's. The regulations of New Zealand & Australia are clear. MEWPs entering NZ for the first time **must** meet the minimum standards of construction and design, AS/NZS1418.10 & AS2550.10. This is the minimum requirement set out by law.

Any MEWPs that do not meet the standard can be assessed, and in some cases upgraded to comply. Such upgrades can include increased stability to sophisticated measuring scales that prevent overloading. The cost of upgrades once added to the purchase price can often become more expensive than purchasing a new unit. New Zealand's high standards are designed to ensure only the safest types of MEWPs are used in the workplace. Importing of MEWPs can seem attractive, although you should be aware that many of the international standards are now not accepted in New Zealand. These include Japanese (JIP), American (AnSI), and European (CE) manufactured MEWPs. They are built with lower safety and operating design parameters. They may look the same and even be brand new, but they are not acceptable in NZ or Australia.

POTENTIAL BUYERS

Mobile Elevating Work Platforms, by the very nature of the product, and working conditions are a potentially high-risk asset to own. Before **"buying a bargain"** it is essential to check out the basics to satisfy yourself as to the state of the MEWP being considered and the level of risk you are prepared to take on. Mis-informed purchases can leave you with a machine that is unsafe for use, non-compliant, and leave you financially out of pocket.

LEGISLATION

New Zealand sets a high regulatory standard when it comes to MEWPs, helped by manufacturers, rental fleet owners, owners and end users working together with the relevant statutory bodies to ensure standards are maintained.

Key legislation currently in place includes:

- Health & Safety at Work Act
- Worksafe MEWP Best Practice Guide
- AS/NZS1418.10 & AS2550.10 – These are NZ and Australian Standards covering the design, testing and operational requirements of EWPs.

The H&SE Act imposes similar, but distinct, duties on people who:

- Hire, lease or loan plant to another person that could be used in a place of work
- Sell or supply plant (other than for hire, lease or loan)
- Install or arrange plant in addition to either of the above.

Where you agree to install or arrange the plant, you must take all practicable steps to install or arrange it so that it is safe for its intended use. Where you contract someone else to carry out the installation or arrangement, you are still required to ensure the plant is installed and arranged safely. Supplier of MEWPs must ensure the unit meets legal, safety and operational standards. Employers are also obligated to ensure all operators have been adequately trained in the safe use and operation of the MEWP.

The key points from the Standards and Industry Best Practice Document in regards to pre-owned EWPs include:

- 6 Monthly Inspections
- Major Inspections, i.e. Ten Year Test (thereafter, every 5 years)
- Original operating & service manuals
- Logbooks / Inspection Records
- Full Maintenance Records
- Operating Instructions

The Major Inspection is particularly relevant when buying Pre-owned MEWPs. AS2550.10 clearly states that any MEWP must be inspected in accordance with the standard which, in practice requires the MEWP to be completely dismantled, stripped down, and all structural components put through non-destructive crack testing. For example, on a 60' (18.2m) Boom Lift this can mean an additional outlay of \$50,000 to \$70,000 depending on machine type, age, history and location. Then it all has to be repeated five years later!! Remember new units first into service have an initial service period of 10 years. Getting this wrong can be a costly exercise.

Meeting AS/NZS1418.10 is law here in New Zealand and meeting AS2550.10 is a requirement of the Code of Practice for safe use of Mobile Elevating Work Platforms. Authorities regard adherence to the Standards and WorkSafe Best Practice Guide documents as a **minimum** requirement.

Note - If your used MEWP does not comply with AS/NZS1418.10 it will not be certifiable for use in New Zealand and a Registered Inspector will fail it's next 6 Monthly Inspection.

WHAT TO CHECK FOR WHEN ASSESSING AN EWP

1. Check the compliance plate matches what it is advertised. e.g. platform height, date of manufacture, model type, serial number.
2. Check the MEWPs maintenance history including retrofits, safety upgrades etc.
3. Check the operating instructions are available and decals in place and legible.
4. Check the Major Inspection (10yr) requirement - if completed sight the Major Inspection Checklist that will confirm who did the testing in New Zealand and their qualifications. Also check who carried out the non-destructive tests in New Zealand and if they meet the requirements of NZNDDTA (New Zealand Non-Destructive Testing Association)
5. Check warranty claims and ease of obtaining spare parts and professional advice.
6. Seek advice from a Registered Inspector - these are the businesses that will be required to certify the EWP 6-monthly to ensure it is safe.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- Check who the manufacturer is and if they are represented in New Zealand.
- Contact the manufacturer and seek their advice on the MEWP you are interested in. Also ensure it is covered by their product liability and what safety retrofits may have been required on the unit.
- Contact the previous owner (details in Logbook) and confirm its working history.
- Work out what type of MEWP you require with regards to working height, frequency of usage, reliability, ground conditions etc.

FINALLY

Always “gather the facts” when considering purchasing a MEWP, be it new or pre-owned. Assistance is only a phone call away, be it the manufacturer, a rental company, an owner, a user or the EWPA.

Legislation can be particularly onerous and it is important to be pre-warned. (E.g. no pre-owned US market MEWPs are sold into Europe, as they do not conform to the EC Standards). Likewise, AS/NZS1418.10 is regarded as a more rigorous Standard than the US.

If still unsure ask yourself this key question: “If there is an accident, will I be liable?”