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# Reducing risk

c&a

arborists

**Tree work is among the most dangerous occupations in the world combining a mixture of working at height, high speed cutting equipment and the unknown nature of individual trees as well as throwing in addition risks such as electrocution from hidden power lines etc. For crane operators lifting trees there is also the fact of dealing with the unknown.**

**Estimating the weight of a tree can be tricky depending on whether it is alive, dormant or dead not to mention type. Carrying out any lift that involves such variables therefore has to be planned meticulously to avoid overturning - mostly caused through incorrectly setting up on poor ground conditions or simply through overloading. And yet all too often such lifts are treated as routine.**

The UK has relatively good accident statistics, they show that between 2000 and 2013, 60 people were killed while working with trees. The USA and Australia clearly have an even higher tree related accident rate, with the number of fatalities increased by electrocution due to the sheer number of live overhead power lines. Figures from the Tree Care Industry Association in the US suggest there were 72 deaths last year alone, down from 92 in 2016 with 81 in 2014.

But why so many fatalities? Many reports suggest complacency, rather than ignorance, plays a significant role. All too often those who die were not harnessed in and are bounced or ripped out of the basket after it is struck by a falling limb. When it comes to electrocution it usually involves people working too close to the line, often they were not even aware of its existence.

To reduce the number of fatalities through falls, the European Union introduced the Temporary Work at Height Directive (2001/45/EC) on how work at height is managed. Falls from height are still the single major cause of workplace deaths and one of the principal causes of major injury. The regulations aim to ensure that all work at height is properly planned, appropriately supervised and carried out in a safe manner. Planning must also include provision for emergencies and rescue and employers are supposed to ensure that no employees take part in work at height unless they are competent or if being trained, supervised by a competent person. The regulations also recommend the use of the safest and most appropriate access equipment for the specific work. And where it is not possible, to take other measures to minimise the distance and consequences of a fall should one occur.

## **Tree climbing is not banned**

Climbing trees is not banned by the regulations, so long as it is properly planned, and the appropriate personal safety equipment selected. However the risk assessment has to demonstrate that the work can be performed safely and that it is the best method of carrying out the work in the circumstances rather



than using an aerial platform.

Tree climbing is by its nature high risk and is physically demanding, even before the actual work begins. In many cases aerial work platforms provide safer and quicker access to trees as well as providing a secure platform from which to operate. It also allows older more experienced tree care professionals to carry on working safely and efficiently long after they might have given up on tree climbing.

The Work at Height regulations do not mandate the use of aerial work platforms for tree work, they do however highlight the fact that they should always be considered when planning the work. Platforms are particularly suited to working on diseased or dying trees, where climbing is particularly dangerous.



*Tree work has its own set of dangers*

Tree climbing can also be difficult or arduous on particular tree species or tree forms. They are also particularly efficient for working on urban trees where work often involves a small amount of work on a large number of trees such as in long avenues where regular pruning is all that is

## **Aerial work platforms should always be considered when planning tree work**



*Always carry out risk assessments prior to work starting to identify dangers*



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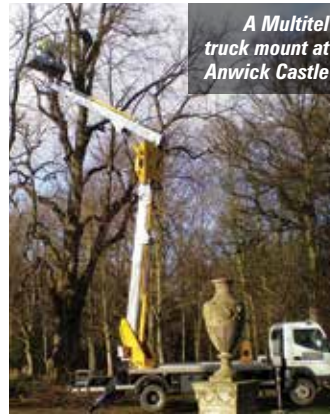
↑ 16 m    ↑ 19 m  
 ← 2 m  
 IN DOOR  
 OUT DOOR  
 750 kg    550 kg

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A Multitel truck mount at Anwick Castle



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Using an aerial work platform for tree work is not without its own hazards. Statistics show that about one in five of all aerial work platform related fatalities involves tree workers, often caused by using the incorrect platform for example one without enough working height for the task, or positioning it too close to the work, risking problems from falling branches and trunks.

Baskets contact with branches should also be avoided, given that they can snag and impede or damage the platform. The resulting catapult effect can easily throw the operator from the basket if the correct fall restraint equipment is not used.

Many fatal incidents could be avoided if proper risk assessments are carried out prior to work starting, identifying dangers such as the presence of overhead power lines and ground conditions

- outrigger mats should always be used wherever the machine is setup. A few years ago, the UK Arboricultural Association and IPAF published new technical guidance documents with safety tips for using aerial work platforms for tree care applications. The guidance analyses some fatal incident reports, draws out the lessons learned and provides safety tips for trained operators before, during and after tree care work.

### Changing attitudes

In recent years attitudes towards the use of powered access in the tree sector have continued to change. There are strong pressures on the grounds of Health and Safety but many think the recent change is more down to economics. As in many other sectors, skilled labour is the major cost when running a business. Good climbers are expensive and depending on where you are in the UK you are looking



Fletcher Access with its Unimog and Omme spider lift



at paying between £150 to £250 per day. Using a platform in most tree work situations results in about double the productivity when compared to climbing. So instead of using two climbers each day, one climber plus a platform can achieve the same result but at less cost yet four or five days per month would probably be sufficient buy a 25 metre platform.

Many manufacturers have seen a significant increase in sales of truck and tracked platforms into the arboriculture sector over the past year both to Local Authorities and to the small and medium sized tree services companies. This transformation is also very visible at arborist shows and the number of tree care companies buying and using aerial work platforms,

particularly spider lifts, truck mounts and 4x4 pickup lifts.

### APF 2018

The recent APF show held at the Ragley Estate in Warwickshire, UK, at the end of September was



*Tony Hobbs - has joined Niftylift from as customer & dealer support manager*



*Allen Freeman of Alfa Access Services with the new 30 metre Teupen Leo 30T Plus*



*The Access Industries stand with a selection of tracked and truck mounted platforms.*

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# arborists



*The Exc@v8 Total Plant Solutions had two Higher Access Teupen 42GTX spider lifts*

plagued by strong winds and traffic problems but there was plenty to see once inside the showground. Over the past 15 years there has been a growing platform presence reflecting the increased acceptance and usage within the sector.

Several new products were on show including two new Platform Basket spider lifts on the Promax Access stand - the 27 metre 27.14 Hybrid with modified undercarriage giving increased ground clearance and the new 13.3 metre 13.80 with jib and 7.7 metres outreach. Alfa Access Services - the recently appointed UK distributor for Teupen - showed the new 30 metre Leo 30T Plus with a maximum platform capacity of 400kg. Klubb and Palfinger Platforms Italy distributor CPL showed its popular 1,150kg/three cubic metre capacity Chipper Tipper mounted on a 3.5 tonne Toyota Hilux or Isuzu D-Max chassis with a 1,300kg payload.



*Versalift UK showed this LAT-38-135-H on an Isuzu D-Max pickup*



*One of Nationwide Platforms' Multitel SMX300HD which features a 400kg platform capacity*



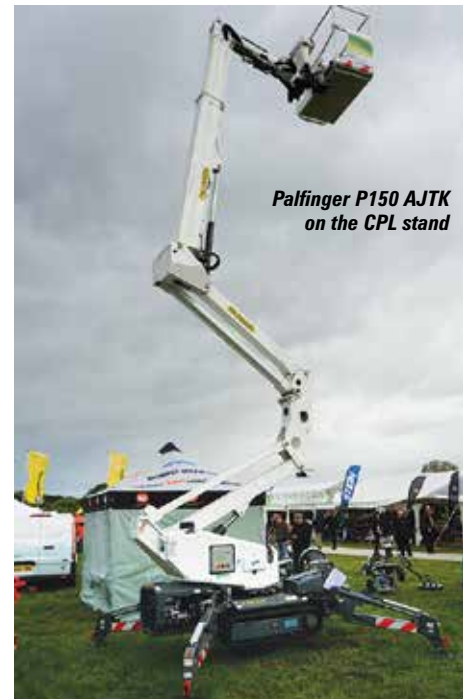
*Niftylift displayed several platforms including the 170SD*



*A Socage A314 on Toyota 4x4 pickup from APS*



*Toyota Hilux Tipper from CPL*



*Palfinger P150 AJTK on the CPL stand*



*Promax modified Platform Basket 27.14 undercarriage specifically for rental company Easy Reach Access Hire*



*Craig Rooke CTE*



*The new Platform Basket 27.14 Hybrid*



*There were several Ruthmann truck mounted platforms including this City Steiger TU285*



*The Wilson Access Hire stand featured an X26JPlus JLG spider lift as well as a Palfinger P300 truck mounted platform*



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