

Aerial Lifts: Check the Machine and Work Area

Todd Jerome Jenkins | v1.0 | Reviewed October 7, 2026 | Discussion + field checks

Why this matters

The lift may pass inspection while its work area remains unsuitable. Verify the actual machine, supporting surface and overhead space together before elevating.

Objective: Confirm model-specific readiness and a safe work area.

Key hazards or failure points

Tip-over; crushing against overhead objects; electrical contact; ejection or falls; failed controls; holes or weak ground; people in the movement zone.

Practical controls

- Use a trained, authorized operator and the actual model instructions. Match configuration and total people, tools and materials to the equipment limits.
- Establish suitable supporting ground, clearances and traffic separation. Resolve electrical hazards through the applicable plan before positioning.
- Use the required compatible fall protection and designated connection points. Keep the gate closed, stand on the platform floor and arrange ground/emergency support.

Verify It in the Field

The operator performs the prescribed pre-start inspection and control checks in a cleared, safe setup. Record results; do not take a faulty lift to height to see whether it works.

Assess the work and travel area safely for holes, edges, overhead crushing points, utilities and people. Confirm model-specific slope, wind, travel and stabilizer criteria without inventing a universal limit.

Confirm protection compatibility, ground controls and the emergency-lowering arrangement. Identify who can help under the procedure. Record the instructions, results and unresolved restrictions.

Stop and reassess

Hold use for failed controls, uncertain support or clearance, incompatible protection, uncontrolled traffic or weather outside the model's criteria. Correct and recheck before operation; changed location requires another area assessment.

Ask the crew

1. Which model limits govern today's setup?
2. Where could the platform trap someone overhead?
3. Who can use the emergency-lowering arrangement?

Boom/aerial-lift briefing; scissor lifts need their own requirements.

Sources: OSHA 1926.453; OSHA aerial-lift eTool; actual model manual.

Free next step: [JHA/JSA planning & field-verification worksheet](#)

Expanded guidance and separate forms: toddjeromejenkins.com/toolbox-talks/aerial-lift-pre-use-work-area-check