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Aerial Work Platform Buying Guide

An aerial work platform is one of the most important investments that can be made when it comes to material handling or personnel access. These platforms can reach various heights thanks to different types of articulating boom lifts, offers multiple shelving options, and allow you to put people or materials over obstacles that may be in the way.

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The best aerial work platforms even provide stabilizing legs so that you can access the benefits of this equipment option almost anywhere.

Aerial work platforms provide help in a number of different industries. From storage and retrieval to aircraft maintenance, you'll find this equipment option employed in construction uses, emergency work, and even utility repair.

How to Find the Best Aerial Work Platform for Me

The best aerial work platform to meet your specific needs may be very different than what another industry may require. That's why it is recommended to look at these four key points before you begin the acquisition process.

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- Working Height. If your aerial work platform cannot reach the height required for material or personnel placement, then there's no reason to purchase that model. Always look at your maximum working height requirements and acquire equipment based on that measurement.
- Weight Capacity. Are you looking for something that can take one worker to a specific height for maintenance needs? Or do you need something that can support thousands of pounds through material placement? Think about what the maximum *potential* need will be in the future and then acquire equipment based on your largest estimate.
- Horizontal Reach. This is the feature that is most often overlooked. There must be a consideration in the amount of reach outward in addition to the amount of reach upward when using an aerial work platform. It's this feature that will allow you to work around obstacles.
- Indoor aerial work platforms often have a different

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design than outdoor aerial work platforms. Outdoor platforms tend to be more rugged and versatile, sometimes even being equipped to vehicles for easy transportation. Indoor platforms tend to focus on stability and durability.

These key points will help you find the best aerial work platforms to meet your needs today, tomorrow, and into the future. Once you've settled on the specific requirements that must be met, you're ready to look at the other aspects of acquirement.

What Are the Different Types of Aerial Work Platforms?

Acquiring the specific type of aerial work platform that meets

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your requirements is another consideration that must be taken into account. Because there is such a variety of different platforms that are available, they have been categorized into specific type groupings based on how they are able to perform.

Each platform-type has specific advantages that are worth considering.

- Scissor Lifts. These are hydraulic work platforms that have vertical movement, but no horizontal movement. The largest models can often reach heights of up to 50 feet and can be used indoors or outdoors. They can lift heavier weights and essentially be a mobile workspace for maintenance work.
- Boom Lifts. These work platforms often offer 360 degrees of reach. They can be telescopic, articulating, or trailer-mounted and each version has its own advantages. Telescoping lifts stretch to a specific length and work

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well in constricted spaces. Articulating lifts allow for movement to multiple working areas while staying elevated. Trailer-mounted lifts offer greater levels of portability to individualized lifting needs.

- Spider Lifts. This type of aerial work platform provides stabilizing legs so that the platform has the highest level of worker or material safety. They are often used to replace scaffolding or ladders, increasing the speed and efficiency of commonly contracted tasks, such as landscaping or building maintenance.
- Personnel Lift. This aerial work platform is typically used for indoor maintenance work or perhaps some light outdoor work. They offer a platform large enough for one person and the equipment is often self-controlled.

For most general purpose work, a personnel lift or a scissor lift will take care of a project's needs. They also tend to be the most affordable work platforms that are available right now.

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Boom lifts tend to be the most expensive lift option and the pricing is dependent on the total reach of the equipment. If you need a lift that can reach out to 80 feet, you'll pay much more than if you need a lift that can reach just 50 feet.

How Are Aerial Work Platforms Powered?

You have three primary power sources that are available to you with the modern aerial work platform.

- This fuel gives your new aerial work platform the most power. Diesel-powered models tend to have increased weight capacities and a greater horizontal reach, but they cannot be used indoors.

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- If you prefer a more environmentally-friendly fuel, some outdoor models will also use propane for combustion instead of gasoline or diesel. They have a similar output to their diesel counterparts, but tend to work for shorter periods of time because the fuel is consumed quickly.
- Many indoor aerial work platforms can either be plugged into local outlets or be charged so that you have a truly portable platform. This type of aerial work platform is the only safe option to use indoors. Some models may also be used for light outdoor needs.

One of the most exciting options that has been included in recent models is a hybrid energy source. By offering electric and diesel or electric and propane as a dual fuel source, you can gain more functionality out of your equipment investment.

It is important to note that the long-term maintenance costs

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for electric aerial work platforms tend to be lower than for the models that use fossil fuels as their primary source of power.

What Are the Available Drive Systems for New Aerial Work Platforms?

The environment will dictate the drive system you should use for any new aerial work platform. Manufacturers have developed four standard drive systems that must be considered during the equipment acquisition process.

#1. Towables. These models are useful for narrow work areas and rural job sites. They feature compact, folding legs that allow for easy storage. It's your best all-around option when you're unsure of the environmental factors you may face on any

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given day.

#2. Tracks. This drive system is usually reserved for the largest aerial work platforms that are manufactured today. They work well in outdoor areas where a slope grade or other natural obstacle may be in the way. This drive system typically supports the most weight and provides the best balance.

#3. Self-Propelled. These aerial work platforms are usually a two-wheeled drive system, allowing you to work on surfaces that may be slightly uneven. They will not handle a significant grading issue, but they do tend to have more on-board storage and can be equipped with more features that make it easier to get work completed.

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#4. All-Terrain. When an aerial work platform is equipped with a 4-wheel drive system, you can go just about anywhere. Although the equipment has a little less reach than a track-based platform, you'll be able to go virtually anywhere with this option.

It should be noted that the drive system which comes equipped to an aerial work platform should not alter the final cost of it. The purpose of the platform is often dependent on the drive system it has been given. Now you'll find that self-propelled platforms or towables tend to be a little less in cost than track-based or 4-wheel drive systems, but this is because the latter platforms are built to do more.

What Accessories or Attachments Are

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Available for Aerial Work Platforms?

To increase the functionality of an aerial work platform, manufacturers have produced several different accessory or attachment options. There are several different opportunities to customize your new platform so that it can make you as efficient as possible with what you need to do. Here are the best options that are available right now.

- Deck Extensions. This option gives the platform an additional amount of reach. It is a way for the platform to go up and over an obstacle that may be in the way. Some of the best aerial work platforms even offer dual extensions today.
- Deck Storage. This accessory usually comes in the form of a pipe rack, but there are additional methods to include extra storage on the platform as well. The

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benefit here is that it stops the tripping hazards that come when equipment or materials lurk at the feet of workers on the platform.

- Job Specific Attachments. There are various upgrades available to those who install drywall, who perform glazing work, or even for those who weld. Cutting packages are also available on many platforms today. These accessories and attachments can often be customized in various ways so that you can have the best possible solution.
- Panel Carriers. This feature offers an additional slot or shelf on the outside of the aerial work platform, providing extra storage space for various materials.

Every aerial work platform also comes with standard safety features, no matter what additional accessories or attachments are added to the base equipment. Look for static straps to prevent static shocks from developing and level warnings to let your people know that the balance of the work platform is

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off.

Another great safety feature is the manual descent valve. This valve allows workers to lower the aerial work platform even when a power loss has occurred by letting hydraulic fluid return to the pump reservoir.

Not every aerial work platform model can support the different attachments and accessories that are available today, so you'll want to verify before acquiring your equipment that it will be able to do what you want it to do.

What Is the Cost of the Best Aerial Work Platforms?

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New aerial work platforms can vary greatly when it comes to cost. Each additional feature added to the equipment will also add to its price. If you're looking for something very basic that can lift one person or a few hundred pounds of cargo or materials at a time, then you can easily acquire your new platform for less than \$10,000. Some entry-level models may even be available for as little as \$5,000.

On the other end of the pricing scale, some aerial work platforms can easily exceed \$100,000 in price. These premium models tend to have the furthest horizontal reach, support the most weight with a vertical lift, and have stabilizing legs that allow you to work in any environment.

When an aerial work platform is properly maintained, it will operate for several years without much interruption.

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Another option to consider is to purchase a used aerial work platform. These platforms have similar features as their newer counterparts and work just as effectively, but because they've had hours of operation already, their price is lower. Used aerial work platforms can save you up to 50% on your equipment acquisition costs, assuming you ask for complete maintenance records and a usage record before finalizing your purchase.

Are You Ready to Acquire the Best Aerial Work Platform for Your Needs Today?

Aerial work platforms may come in many different sizes and reach opportunities. They may have different accessories or attachments that can be used. Their drive systems may tackle different obstacles. Yet each one has the potential to be the best aerial work platform to meet your needs right now.

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There is no one-size-fits-all solution that can be applied to the need of a working platform like these.

An aerial work platform may be an investment, but it is an equipment option that will provide you with dividends at the conclusion of every project. That's why now is the time to begin the acquirement process.

This is why our team is available right now to take any questions you may have. Let us know what your requirements happen to be and together we'll work to find an aerial work platform that will make you more efficient and productive from the moment you include it with your operations.

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