

HORIZON PLATFORMS BLOG

[Select by topics](#)

BOOM LIFT VS SCISSOR LIFT: WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENCES & WHICH DO I NEED?

Whether you're managing an indoor warehouse, operating on a busy construction site, or attending to an important installation project, choosing the right type of mobile access platform is essential. At this stage, you're likely asking yourself: which is better, a boom lift or scissor lift?

In this article, to help you pick the best platform, we've explored the key differences between boom lifts and scissor lifts, including taking a deep dive into each **type of MEWP** and the circumstances in which you might choose one over the other.

WHAT IS A BOOM LIFT?

Boom lifts, also known as cherry pickers, are a type of powered access platform; and feature an extendable boom, raised by a hydraulic crane. The extent to which this telescopic arm extends depends on the type of boom you choose, but at its end you'll find a 'bucket' (you might know it as a basket), which is essentially a platform for users to safely and securely work from.

The Different Types of Boom Lift

So, we've looked at the general overview of what boom lifts are, but there are many **types of cherry picker** to consider! We've outlined four of the most common boom variations, to help you choose the right one for your job.



- **Articulating boom:** Articulating booms have a handy joint that allows the lift to manoeuvre up and over (or up and around) an obstacle.
- **Telescopic boom:** This type of boom lift can be significantly extended, to give you lofty reach. However, unlike articulating models, it can only be extended in a straight line, and cannot overcome obstacles.
- **Mast booms:** Mast booms are a popular choice of MEWP when operating at a lower height, as they allow you to move up and down in confined spaces with ease.
- **Spider lifts:** Spider lifts, also referred to as crawler lifts, are similar to articulating booms, in that they have up-and-over capabilities – though, they're often more compact and have increased stability with a broad base outriggers. This helps you access hard-to-reach spots on tricky terrain.



When to Choose a Boom Lift

Boom lifts have many practical applications, but they're particularly well-suited to overcoming obstacles. Their manoeuvrability makes them a strong choice of MEWP if, for instance, you need to get around or over obstacles at height; and they especially come into their own if you're unable to place your platform directly underneath the working environment. You can position your cherry picker away, and use the extendable arm to reach a restricted area.

For more information, read our guide: [Why do I need a cherry picker?](#)

WHAT IS A SCISSOR LIFT?

Scissor lifts are another type of MEWP, and like boom lifts, they're designed to elevate people in a basket to work at height safely. However, rather than featuring a telescopic arm, the mechanism instead resembles a pair of open scissors – characterised by a crisscrossing structure that extends upwards. This provides a secure, spacious, and stable working environment.

The Different Types of Scissor Lift

As with cherry pickers, there are different **types of scissor lift** to consider:

- **Electric scissor lifts:** This type of scissor lift is generally more compact than other variations. They're often fitted with non-marking tires, and the low-noise electric engine doesn't produce exhaust emissions – making them ideal for indoor use.
- **Hydraulic scissor lifts:** Hydraulic lifts are simple to operate and can be powered by either an electric motor or compressed air. Typically, they require minimal training – making them an ideal MEWP when you have late-notice lifting needs, whether in the warehouse or at a construction site.
- **Diesel powered scissor lifts:** Though less eco-friendly than electric variations, traditional diesel-powered scissors are typically fitted with larger platforms, so can be an effective choice when working on significant outdoor projects.
- **Rough terrain scissor lifts:** As the name suggests, this type of scissor lift is well-suited to tricky terrain. Heavy duty tyres, high weight capacity, and effective balance mechanisms make them a safe choice when working from height.
- **Pneumatic scissor lifts:** Pneumatic scissors are powered by air pressure, offering a clean and maintenance-free MEWP. They're a useful alternative, especially when working indoors.



When to Choose a Scissor Lift

Scissor lifts are ideally suited for when you're able to position your MEWP directly underneath the working area. They offer strong stability and plenty of room for users to handle tools and materials – while the crisscrossing scissor motion allows you to move up and down to accurately choose an appropriate height with ease.

For more information, read our guide: [The benefits of scissor lifts](#).

BOOM LIFT VS SCISSOR LIFT: WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENCES?

Height

While both scissor lifts and cherry pickers are designed for working from height, boom lifts typically offer greater vertical reach – perfect for working at roof level of large warehouses or stadium, for example. For instance, due to the length of the telescopic arm, boom lifts can provide working heights of up to 58 metres – compared to our scissor lift platforms which offer working heights of up to 22 metres.

Direction

As highlighted above, you often get greater manoeuvrability with a boom lift vs scissor lifts. This is thanks to the joints in the mechanism, which can guide you up, over, and around various obstacles with ease. On the other hand, scissor lifts are a great pick if you require a strong and sturdy platform and are only moving vertically.



Load Capacity

When comparing models of boom lift vs scissor lift, it's essential to consider the total weight of your environment, including all workers, tools, and materials.

At Horizon Platforms, while most of our boom lifts offer a safe working load (SWL) of 200-250kg, other models can handle up to 400kg. As for our range of scissor lifts, though, you'll find models that can handle upwards of 1,134kg – making them truly effective weight-carrying machines. So, while cherry pickers offer flexibility, scissors come out on top when it comes to load capacity.

Indoor vs Outdoor use

While it's true boom lifts and scissor lifts can both be used on varying terrain, our range of cherry pickers is largely tailored to outdoor use: within our collection of booms, we have 63 for outside use, including rough and tricky terrain, with a further 18 that are suited to indoor environments.

On the other hand, our selection of scissor lifts is a little more balanced towards both indoor and outdoor terrains, with 36 indoor models and 58 outdoor machines. If you're unsure which MEWP is best for your latest project, though, [get in touch](#) with our experts who'll be more than happy to advise on the differences between our range of scissors lifts and cherry pickers. Our platform finder is also a great [option for MEWP selection](#).

Or, if you're interested in learning more about our range of powered access platforms, explore the latest from the team over on [our blog](#).



Malcolm Briggs

13th May 2025

Categories: Access Platform Rental

Tags: Access Platforms, cherry picker hire, MEWPS, Scissor Lift Hire

Previous

Articulating vs Telescopic Boom: When to Use One

Next

What Are the Uses of a Cherry Picker?

