

Modifying your Home: Platform lifts

December 2015

Is it difficult for you to get in and out of your home because of your disability? Maybe there are some modifications that could be made to your home to make it easier for you to move around. The Ministry of Health might be able to help fund these modifications.

The type of modifications the Ministry of Health can help fund for your home will depend on your disability related needs and situation. They could include:

- hand rails
- a ramp
- a platform lift.

What is a platform lift?

A platform lift has a flat surface, or platform, to hold people or objects. The lift moves the platform up and down from the ground level. The lift is made of galvanised steel and is designed for outdoor use.

A platform lift can be used where there is not enough space or the ground is too steep for a ramp.

The lift must have a permanent concrete pad as a base and a separate power supply. It needs regular maintenance to operate safely.



Image source: Brisbane City Council, used under a Creative Commons license.

Is a platform lift the best option for you?

To get an accessible entrance to your home that works well for you, think about how you get around, what your disability needs are and what your home is like.

The main things to think about

- Which entrance do you usually use at your home? Is this the easiest or most practical way to get in and out of your home? Are you able to get to that entrance easily from the most reasonable place to park your car?
- Does the design of the entrance or the slope of the land make it difficult to install a ramp?
- Is there enough space to install a lift?
- Will other people need to use the existing steps to get in and out of your home?
- Will you be operating or travelling on the platform lift by yourself or will you need someone else on the lift to assist you?
- Will you be using a manual or power wheelchair on the platform lift? (The weight of a wheelchair will help determine what type of lift you need.)
- How long do you think you might be living in your present home – will you be there for at least two years?

Other things to think about

There are a number of important features to consider when choosing the right platform lift for you, including:

- the size of the platform – does someone else need to travel on the lift with you?
- the lifting capacity – the lift's carrying weight limit is important, especially if you use a power wheelchair, which is heavier than a manual wheelchair
- where the operating controls should be placed
- whether a remote control or call station (to 'call' the lift from the bottom or top position) are needed.

However, sometimes modifying your home may not be the best or only option for you. Maybe you should consider moving to another home that suits your needs better.

Getting a platform lift

Contact a Ministry of Health Equipment and Modification Service (EMS) qualified housing assessor to help you work out what type of platform lift best suits your needs.

They will help you work out the most cost-effective option for your needs and if you can get funding help from the Ministry of Health.

EMS qualified housing assessors are occupational therapists. You can contact them through your:

- local district health board
- Needs Assessment Service Coordination (NASC) organisation
- GP
- www.otnz.co.nz/public/find-an-occupational-therapist/
- Enable Information on phone: 0800 17 1981.

You may also choose to organise and pay for the platform lift yourself.

Ministry of Health funding

- If you have already paid for any modifications to your home yourself, generally you cannot claim back the cost for those modifications from the Ministry of Health.
- The Ministry of Health has a limited amount of funding available for housing modifications to support disabled people. They use a **prioritisation tool** to make sure this funding is used as fairly as possible. The prioritisation tool compares your current needs and how much you will benefit from the home modifications with other disabled people's needs.
- Generally you can only get Ministry of Health funding once for a particular type of modification.
- Funding up to a maximum of \$15,334 (including GST) is available for modifications to get into, out of and between levels of your home, including modifications to install a platform lift.
- If the total cost of the modifications to your home is more than \$8,076 (including GST), you will have to have an **income and cash asset test** to work out whether you need to pay any of the cost yourself. The total cost includes the cost of any other modifications that the Ministry of Health has already funded for you since you turned 16 years of age.

Platform lifts for children aged 15 years or younger do not need income and cash asset tests. (Find out more about the income and cash asset tests process in our factsheet *Modifying Your Home: Income and Cash Asset Tests*.)

- Platform lifts do not need to be covered in order to be effective. You (or the homeowner if it is not you) will need to pay any costs for covering your platform lift from the weather.

Repairs and maintenance

- Platform lifts need regular maintenance and cleaning to keep them slip resistant and in good working order.
- Low-rise platform lifts (up to 1.5 metres high) are available on long-term loan from the Ministry of Health. You must return the lift when it is no longer needed.
- The Ministry of Health covers the costs of all repairs, maintenance and installation or removal of any borrowed low-rise platform lift. Such work is completed by the Ministry of Health's equipment providers, either:
 - Accessable (for people living in Auckland or Northland)
 - Enable New Zealand (for people living in the rest of New Zealand).
- The home-owner is responsible for all costs associated with maintaining a platform lift that is over 1.5 metres high, including any repairs, maintenance, installation, replacement or removal. This type of platform lift is part of the home-owner's property.

For more information about platform lifts

If you live:

- **in Auckland or Northland:**
contact **Accessable**
Freephone 0508 001 002
Email **info@accessable.co.nz**
- **anywhere else in New Zealand:**
contact **Enable New Zealand**
Freephone 0800 17 1981
Email: **enable@enable.co.nz**



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HP 6335