

Workplace Transport Safety

Introduction

Each year there are a significant number of people killed or injured in incidents involving vehicles in the workplace. Additionally, a lot of damage is done to property which further affects company profits. With better planning, training and awareness in relation to transport safety, you can avoid most of these incidents.

Responsibilities

Employers have a general duty under the law to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety of their employees and others who may be affected by their activities.

Employees also have a duty to look after themselves and not put others at risk while at work.

Workplace Transport

Workplace transport includes any vehicle that is used in a work setting, such as trucks, dumpers, tractors, mobile cranes or fork lift trucks. It can also include cars, vans and large goods vehicles when these are operating off the public highway.

It does not include transport on the public highway, air, rail or water transport, and specialist transport used in underground mining. However, a goods vehicle which is loaded or unloading on the public highway is considered as workplace transport.

Risk Assessment

When considering the risk assessment, think about what accidents might happen, and take steps to try and make sure they are avoided.

Following the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) guidance on undertaking a risk assessment will help and guide you to ensure your company's risk assessments are suitable and sufficient. The document is called '**Five Steps to Risk Assessment**' and is available as a free download from the HSE website at; <http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg163.pdf>

When identifying the work activities involving vehicles, look at your activities over a reasonable time period (e.g. a week or month) to ensure that all activities are identified. Don't forget to consider visiting vehicles to your workplace. Activities may include;

- arrival and departure
- travel around the workplace
- loading, unloading and securing loads
- sheeting
- coupling; and
- vehicle maintenance work

Once you have identified all the work activities involving vehicles, you need to identify the risks associated with these activities. Ask yourself what the possible dangers (hazards) are, and what is causing those dangers, for example;

- Could someone be hit by a moving vehicle?
- Could someone fall from a vehicle?
- Could anyone be hit by objects falling from a vehicle?
- Could the vehicle tip over?

When looking to identify these dangers (hazards), include;

- the vehicles themselves
- the routes or roadways used by the vehicles
- what drivers are doing
- what other people are doing

Remember, if you introduce new people, vehicles, equipment or working practices, you will need to look at your risk assessment to see if it's still suitable or if it needs updating.

Communication

Good communication is essential for maintaining a safe workplace and helps to ensure that safety information can be put into use as effectively as possible. Managers should listen to their employees concerns and take appropriate action where required.

All employees, contractors, maintenance personnel and visiting drivers must understand their responsibilities. Include safety responsibilities in job descriptions and in training, raise safety issues in day-to-day contact with employees, and display safety notices.

Contractors and Subcontractors

Those in control of any site should provide contractors with appropriate health and safety information. For example, you should share information about;

- the workplace
- routes to be used
- vehicles and equipment on site
- specific hazards
- other people on site, including other contractors or visiting drivers

Visiting Drivers

Visiting drivers should be told the layout of the site, the routes to be taken, and relevant safe working practices (e.g. for parking and loading or unloading), as they may not have visited the site before. You could consider printing site rules, directions, maps, approach information (e.g. narrow routes, weak bridges, low overhead cables or bridges etc.) on the back of order forms, so the drivers know what to expect before arrival at site.

Also consider that foreign drivers may have different visibility from their cabs (if their vehicles are left-hand drive). They may be unfamiliar with UK signs or speed limits. It may be helpful to supply instructions in other languages.

Deliveries

Deliveries and collections can be some of the most dangerous transport activities. There are a number of significant transport related accidents and incidents in the workplace which take place during deliveries.

Where possible, ensure that parking, loading and unloading is undertaken off the road or pavements, well away from the public. Where this is not possible, remember that health and safety law will still cover work activities on public roads, and all the normal duties of employers apply. Ensure your risk assessment assesses the risk to members of the public who may drive or walk near the vehicle.

Ensure your site is Safe

Remember that every site is different and each site is likely to present different hazards and risks. Therefore companies with multiple sites will probably need a separate risk assessment for each site.

A well designed and organised workplace will ensure workplace transport accidents and incidents are less likely. Often it is the small things that can make a significant difference, such as making sure visibility is good, lighting is adequate and in working order, potholes are filled, markings and signs are clear and spills are cleaned up quickly. Such controls do not need to be time consuming or expensive to implement and manage.

Wherever possible, keep vehicles and pedestrians apart with physical barriers. Where this is not practicable, then marked walkways should be provided and any areas where vehicles and pedestrians need to operate together should be designated as an area where high visibility vests/jackets must be worn by pedestrians.

Reversing vehicles are a major cause of many accidents and incidents. Therefore, if possible, introduce a one-way traffic system with drive-through loading and unloading areas. If this is not possible, you will need to consider other ways of making reversing safer e.g. providing a banksman, ensuring vehicles are fitted with reversing buzzers etc.

Controlling Speed

By limiting vehicle speed on your site, you can significantly reduce the risk of accidents and incidents happening. The best way to achieve this is to use fixed features that stop drivers travelling too quickly. Examples of these include;

- speed humps
- narrowing routes with bollards
- raised kerbs
- chicanes; and
- rumble strips or areas

You need to assess the various options and select those which are most suitable for the traffic using your site. It is possible that the wrongly selected feature could increase the risk e.g. by affecting the stability of vehicles or less-secured loads.

Speed limits are used widely to control speed on sites, but they need to be set at sensible levels, or drivers will be tempted to break them. So when considering the setting of speed limits for your site, consider;

- the vehicles using the route
- the types of load they carry and how they carry them
- the driving surface
- the route layout, including how tight the bends are, and visibility at junctions
- hazards along the route
- other work being done on or near the route

The most common problems with speed limits are that they are inappropriate, poorly signed, or not enforced. They are often unreasonably for the site conditions and difficult to enforce in practice. Often speedometers are inaccurate or do not read at very low speeds and some internal vehicles used on the site, such as fork lift trucks, may not have speedometers fitted.