

Skip Lorry Safety

Information Sheet

December 2021

Introduction

This guidance will help to improve knowledge and understanding of the key steps needed to prevent injuries in the use of waste skip collection vehicles (skip lorries). It explains the legal duties for employers, self-employed and operators in the waste industry, and how to identify hazards, assess risks and put in place the correct controls to reduce dangers and prevent injuries.



What the law requires

Safe place of work for employees

Employers have a legal duty to provide a safe place of work, and skip lorries are a place of work. The law expects every employer to make sure employees involved in waste collection activities are protected from ill health and injury.

Safe place of work for other people

Waste collection activities involve people other than employees, including contractors and members of the public. When managing risks, employers and operators must protect the safety of all people involved in, or affected by, their waste collection activities. Where several parties are involved in these activities, the law expects employers, including the self-employed, to cooperate in providing safe systems of work, with clear responsibilities laid down.

Safe loads

Operators of skip collection vehicles also have a legal duty to secure the load. Load securing for road transport is covered by road traffic legislation. It is against the law for a skip lorry to be overloaded or for material from a vehicle or skip to fall out onto the public road. All loads that are carried by vehicles, including skips and their contents, must be properly secured to the vehicle at all times. Skips must be covered so that material inside does not fall out onto the road, or onto people or vehicles, while being lifted on or off the vehicle or transported.

Skips must not be overloaded or exceed the safe load capacity of the skip lorry.

Occupational Health and Safety legislation also applies to load securing. The Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005 provides that:

- employers make sure that systems of work are planned and carried out correctly for securing and transporting loads, and that equipment is provided in good serviceable condition for securing loads,
- drivers and loading and unloading staff are given instruction, information and training about securing loads, and
- the right plans and procedures are also in place to deal with times where a skip, or the load, has moved or fallen from the skip lorry.

Risk assessment

The collection of waste using skip lorries presents many dangers. Operators of skip lorries must have up to date correct risk assessments in place to effectively manage dangers in the workplace. There are specific legal duties on employers to identify the dangers, assess the risk of injury presented by those dangers and complete a written risk assessment to manage dangers to all those affected.



Log on to <https://www.besmart.ie/> to access the HSA free online safety statement and risk assessment resource for the following business types; *Skip Hire, Haulage, HGV Transport, Tipper Truck Operator*

The first part of any risk assessment is to identify what can cause harm i.e. the hazards. Once identified, the risks from these hazards should be rated in terms of:

- Who could be harmed?
- How likely it is for that harm to happen?
- How badly could a person be harmed?

Information, instruction and training

The skip lorry operator plays a vital part in making sure everyone is safe, not just themselves but also other people who may be at risk. Drivers should hold a valid driving licence, of the correct category for the vehicle they are driving.

To meet their legal duties, employers must make sure that all skip lorry operators, both new and existing, are trained properly. This includes employees, sub-contractors and others involved in waste skip collections. Training should be structured, on-the-job training (familiarisation with equipment and systems of work) so that the skip lorry operator gets specific knowledge that is unique to the waste industry. New skip lorry operators should be given particular attention.

Training should include:

- how to regularly inspect the skip lorry, the lifting mechanism and waste skips,
- safe systems of work for the specific skip lorry they are assigned to,
- how to deliver and collect skips located on or near a public road or close to passing vehicles,
- incident reporting, and
- use of personal protective equipment.

In addition, they should be given training specific to their skip lorry, to help them carry out their work collecting and delivering skips safely, such as:

- how to reverse safely,
- on safe systems of work for using hoists or lifters,
- tachograph use (if applicable),
- daily vehicle pre-use checks, and
- emergency procedures in the event of an incident or breakdown.

Training should also extend beyond technical knowledge and ability to operate a skip lorry to wider safety critical matters such the identification of site specific dangers associated with skip collection in new or unfamiliar

locations. Drivers must have training and clear instruction on what to do if they believe they cannot carry out a particular operation safely, for example, if a skip due for collection is blocked by traffic, damaged, overloaded and unsafe to collect.

Co-operation with others in the work place

Where sub-contractors and others are engaged in waste skip collections they also must have proper safe systems of work, risk assessments and personal protective equipment (PPE) in place. Where jobs are shared, information should also be shared between all parties about relevant risk assessments, safe systems of work and work practices.

Key hazards in waste skip collection



Driver falling and slipping



Failure of lifting equipment



Being struck by falling skip



Lifting arm striking overhead cables/obstructions



Striking pedestrians or vulnerable road users when driving forward or reversing



Road collision



Vehicle overturns



Runaway vehicles

Other important factors to keep in mind

The operator of a skip lorry should consider some key questions:

- Has the work been planned and organised properly?
- Who drives the vehicle?
- Who operates the hoist controls?
- Is the driver trained and competent?

- Does the driver have the right licence to drive the lorry?
- Will there be interactions with other employees and the public?
- Is the vehicle and equipment, including hoist, suitable for use and properly maintained?
- Is there a possibility of persons going into the danger zone while lifting or tipping?

Inspection and maintenance of waste collection equipment and vehicles

There is a legal duty on operators to make sure that vehicles are road-worthy. Maintenance of skip lorries and skips should be carried out regularly, in line with the manufacturers' recommendations. This should be part of a formal maintenance programme. In addition, routine scheduled cleaning, lubrication and pre-use checks of vehicles for interim faults should be completed. It is important to keep a record of all maintenance operations for each vehicle and skip. A planned, routine preventative maintenance system will improve safety and reduce business losses by:

- spotting faults before a serious breakdown happens, and
- allowing for repairs before the equipment becomes too bad to fix.

Skip lorry lifting components and hoists

It is important to include planned servicing and maintenance of the hoists when scheduling skip lorry maintenance. The servicing and maintenance schedule should follow the instructions provided by the manufacturer, or supplier, of the hoist.

The hoisting mechanism should be examined by a competent person at least every 12 months. Where faults affecting safe use of the hoist are identified, arrangements should be made for prompt reporting and timely repair. Written instructions for employees should set out what maintenance work can be carried out in-house as part of routine service or repair, and what work should be referred to specialists in hoist maintenance.

Lifting chains used for lifting skips should be inspected before use, and removed from service when displaying signs of damage. Lifting chains should be given a thorough examination by a competent person at least every 6 months.

Collection and delivery of skips

Only one full skip, or partially full skip, should be carried at any one time on a waste collection vehicle designed to carry one skip on the chassis of the vehicle. Skips and their contents must not exceed the load capacity of the skip lorry.

Loaded or partly loaded skips should not be stacked on top of each other, or nested in an empty skip, on the back of the skip lorry for transport. A skip must never be transported when swinging from the lifting chains.

Empty skips should be stacked on a skip lorry no more than three high as long as the additional two skips can be secured, or nested, within a base skip. Where more than one empty skip is being moved like this from place to place, they must be additionally secured to the vehicle framework using load-securing straps. The straps should be protected from getting damaged where they cross sharp or rough edges.

Load securing



Employers must make sure systems of work, for securing and transporting skips and loads, are planned, performed and maintained. Appropriate plans and procedures must also be in place in the event of something going wrong.

Drivers loading and unloading skips must be provided with instruction, information and training on:

- loading, unloading, securing loads, and
- safe system of work for adding or removing nets or covers.

Employers must make sure that adequate equipment for securing loads, such as nets and covers, is provided and maintained. Working at height, when climbing onto vehicles to release covers/nets, should be eliminated as much as possible by the use of a gantry, automated skip covering systems or setting down skips to avoid work at height.

It is very important to pay attention to the storage/securing of lifting chains, lashing chains, straps and netting when they are not in use. If items such as these are not adequately secured to the vehicle they can fall off and hit a person, another vehicle or cause a danger on the road.

Safe vehicle and safe equipment – daily checks

Employers should put in place a system to require drivers to check their vehicle and its lifting equipment every day prior to use. This simple preventative maintenance system should check that the following are not damaged and work properly:

- Brakes (foot and handbrake)
- Steering
- Tyres
- Lights
- Windscreen and washer
- Seatbelts
- Wheel chocks (if needed)
- Vision aids – mirrors and CCTV cameras (where fitted)
- Audible reversing alarm (where fitted)
- Lifting equipment including controls, hooks, chains and hoses

A record must be kept of these daily checks and faults reported for repair.

On the road considerations

Other examples of risk-reduction measures that operators should put in place include the following:

- Monitoring that drivers adhere to the rules of the road and adopt safe driving practices.
- Planning work schedule to make sure drivers comply with Drivers' Hours rules (where applicable)
- Liaising with customers to locate or re-locate skip collection point.
- Planning collection times to avoid busy times on site or busy adjacent roads.
- Trying to avoid opening hours or shift change when collecting or delivering skips to facilities such as shopping centres or manufacturing sites.
- Planning routes to avoid the environs of schools during school rush hour.
- Identifying sites that might have high-risk entry and exit issues, for example, where members of the public cannot be easily directed.
- Making sure a net or cover is fitted when carrying a load

Reversing of skip lorries

Reversing is a high risk vehicle manoeuvre, and drivers must be given instructions on these methods. Operators should control the risks by:

- implementing a reversing policy,
- eliminating reversing – wherever possible,

- minimising reversing – both the amount of reversing and distances,
- using reversing aids – reversing cameras, mirrors, sensor alarms, and
- using trained reversing assistants or banksmen/signallers.



When using reversing assistants, operators should make sure that:

- only trained reversing assistants are used to help reverse a vehicle, and both driver and assistant are trained in the use of hand signals, and
- all reversing assistants are provided with clear instructions on where to stand when giving direction to the driver to make sure the driver can see them. Similarly, reversing assistants must be able to see the driver in the mirror at all times.

Communication and reporting hazards

Employers/operators need to communicate risk assessments and safe systems of work to workers. Additionally workers should be encouraged to report hazards. Drivers must be trained to identify and report

hazardous situations they come across, particularly when they are out collecting skips, which they believe could result in a risk to themselves, others or to the vehicle if they continued with the operation. Employers must empower drivers to take action to remove or manage the hazard. If they are not able to do this, they must report it back to their supervisor at the depot immediately. This reporting system should be backed up by a timely response by the skip collection company.

Some examples of such situations include the following:

- An overloaded or unsafely loaded skip which should not be collected by the driver, and the company should raise the issue promptly with the customer.
- If there is not enough headroom to retrieve the skip or container, the driver should not collect until a resolution is identified to remove the risk.
- If there is not enough space to be able to work safely, a driver should identify the hazard, not set down the skip and should ask the customer for directions to a safer place.
- Where there is a skip or container on sloping ground either an up/down slope, cross slope or combination of up/down/cross slopes, the driver should not set down or collect a skip but consult with the customer on a more suitable location or refer for follow up action by the skip collection company.
- Where there is soft ground, a driver should identify the hazard, not drive onto or set down a skip and request the customer to identify a more suitable location to set down the skip or refer to the employer for follow up action.

Skip selection

There are different types and sizes of skips including mini, larger and compactor skips. Operators should have safe systems of work in place for choosing the correct type of skip for the intended task. This should include:

- strength, considering its intended load,
- stability, considering the weight and placement of skip contents, and
- methods to control the acceptable distribution of load weight within the skip.

Skip operators should make sure that all waste collection skips remain in good repair and are fit for purpose. A safe system of work should be in place to check important parts such as lifting lugs and chains, and any defects that are seen should be recorded and reported for repair.

This involves carrying out regular checks and reporting on the condition of skips and containers including:

- Lifting points
- Locking points
- Tipping bars
- Doors
- Door locks
- Restraints
- Covers
- General condition

Operatives and drivers dispatching skips for use must be provided with adequate training to help them to recognise faults and/or damage to skips/containers that could make them unsafe to use. This is important so that they can be removed from service. They should be instructed to remove from use and return damaged and unsafe skips and containers to their depot for repair, or to get further advice.

Repaired skips must be inspected before they are put back into service. This policy should form part of the operators written procedures.

Delivering and collecting skips – procedures for drivers

Before setting off for a collection you should:

- check for information about any special precautions for the drop/pick-up points. (Systems should be in place for sites to inform the skip company about these, and agree precautions, beforehand.),
- check the clearance height of the vehicle skip combination to prevent contact with overhead cables/obstructions,
- check skip lorry lifting arms are fully lowered,
- check any load/skip is secure and chains are correctly stowed, and
- check you have your safety gear (PPE), especially high-visibility clothing and boots.

Before entering a site, you should:

- know exactly where to go, and what needs to be done – be prepared to take direction on the site,
- obey all site traffic rules – signs, one-way systems,
- be aware of pedestrians at all times, and
- wear your safety gear. High-visibility clothing and slip-resistant safety boots are essential. Other PPE, such as a hard hat or safety glasses may be needed, depending on the site.

Getting out of your cab properly

- Always maintain three points of contact descending the cab of the vehicle. Jumping out can cause broken limbs or twisted ankles, or land you into the path of another vehicle.
- Keep close to your vehicle.
- Do not risk being run over by other vehicles.



Dropping off and picking up, you should:

- follow reversing procedures,
- make sure no pedestrians are nearby during reversing and loading/unloading operations,
- prevent 'runaway' skip lorry incidents: Park on good ground – avoid sloping, uneven or soft ground,
- always apply the handbrake,
- use chocks where necessary on slopes. The handbrake is only effective when the rear wheels are firmly in contact with the ground, so before lifting any skip on any inclined ground make sure the front wheels are chocked,
- use stabilisers in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions,
 - keep braked rear wheels on the ground when on slopes.
- if the vehicle does not have all-wheel braking, flat plates should be fitted to the stabiliser legs,
- avoid trapping between the skip and vehicles/walls, keep a good, clear space all round,
- sheet/unsheet safely – from ground level wherever possible or alternatively use a gantry,
- use auto-sheeters where provided, and
- avoid climbing on the vehicle or skips.

Before lifting the skip, you should check to make sure that:

- hooks, chains, lugs, and bars are fully engaged,
- chains are not twisted, damaged or knotted. They should not snag during load movement,
- skip floors/panels/hinges/chains/lugs, tipping bar etc. are in good condition,
- doors (where fitted) are in good condition with proper locks,

- the load is not overweight, and
- no person is near or beside the skip lorry when unloading or lifting the skip.

Further information

1. Skip and container safety in waste management and recycling, Waste Industry Safety and Health (WISH) Forum, UK. <https://www.wishforum.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Waste-06.pdf>
2. Safe use of skip loaders, Health and Safety Executive, UK <https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg378.pdf>
3. Health and Safety Authority Free Online Risk Assessments <https://www.besmart.ie/>
4. Commercial Vehicle Roadworthiness Testing - Road Safety Authority <https://www.cvrt.ie/en/About-CVRT/Pages/default.aspx>
5. Preventing Vehicle Related Slips, Trips and Falls - Health and Safety Authority https://www.hsa.ie/eng/Publications_and_Forms/Publications/Information_Sheets/Watch_Your_Step_Infosheet.pdf
6. Vehicles at Work – Health and Safety Authority https://www.hsa.ie/eng/Vehicles_at_Work/
7. Load Securing – Health and Safety Authority https://www.hsa.ie/eng/Vehicles_at_Work/Load_Securing/
8. Daily walk around checks – Road Safety Authority <http://www.cvrt.ie/en/Operator-Driver-Obligations/Pages/Daily-walk-around-checks-and-defect-detection.aspx>
9. Driving for Work <http://drivingforwork.ie/>
10. Hook loader safety alert https://www.hsa.ie/eng/Safety_Alerts/2015/Hook_Loader/
11. Drivers' Hours and the Transport Working Time Directive, Road Safety Authority <https://rsa.ie/services/business-operators/resources>