

Workplace Transport Safety Management

Information Sheet

This information sheet provides guidance to help you ensure that vehicle movements at the workplace and activities such as loading, unloading, maintenance, etc. are carried out safely.

It applies to any vehicle or piece of mobile equipment which is used by employers, employees, self-employed people, contractors or visitors in any work setting (apart from travel on public roads).

This covers a very wide range of vehicles, e.g. cars and vans while operating off the public highway, forklift trucks, heavy goods vehicles and rider operated mobile equipment, etc.

Background Information

The transport sector consistently has the third highest worker fatality rate each year; only the agriculture and construction sectors have higher fatality rates. Of the 306 workplace fatalities recorded since 2003, 33 occurred in the transport sector.

Eleven of these fatalities were triggered by 'fall, collapse, breakage of material', nine were due to loss of control of a vehicle or other transport equipment and seven were due to falls from height. In terms of occupations, the majority of these fatalities involved 'drivers and mobile plant operators' or 'heavy truck and lorry drivers'.

Approximately 1000 work-related non-fatal injuries are reported to the Authority each year from the transport sector.

The most common triggers for non-fatal injuries in the sector are 'manual handling' and 'slips, trips and falls'. These accidents usually result in property damage and loss of profit also. Most of these accidents could be avoided by implementation of an effective safety management system (SMS) covering the appropriate use of vehicles at the workplace.

The most common workplace transport accidents involve:

- ▲ Being struck or run over by a vehicle;
- ▲ Falling from vehicles;
- ▲ Vehicles overturning;
- ▲ Vehicles running out of control;
- ▲ Vehicles touching power-lines;
- ▲ Vehicles driven by untrained drivers.

What is covered by 'Workplace transport' equipment?

The Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (General Application Regulations) 2007 (GAR) define 'Work equipment' as any machinery, appliance, apparatus, tool or installation for use at work. This has a very wide scope and includes all transport vehicles used for work.

These regulations go on to define 'place of work' as an area on the premises of an undertaking intended to house workstations and which employees have access to during the course of their employment. It explicitly excludes transport used outside the undertaking or a place of work inside a means of transport.

As an Employer what must I address when dealing with workplace transport safety?

Workplace transport safety management should be addressed in the following manner:

- ▲ Work should be planned and organised;
- ▲ Relevant Risk Assessments must be conducted;
- ▲ The most appropriate workplace transport equipment should be selected for use;
- ▲ People operating workplace transport equipment must be competent to do so;
- ▲ Workplace transport equipment used must be properly inspected and maintained.

What is a Risk Assessment?

A risk assessment is a careful examination of what could cause harm to people as a result of a work activity. It allows you to take precautions to prevent harm occurring.

What's involved in conducting a risk assessment?

There are five key steps to a risk assessment:

1. Look at the hazards
2. Decide who might be harmed and how
3. Evaluate the risks and decide whether the existing precautions are adequate or whether more should be done
4. Record your findings
5. Review your assessment on a regular basis at predetermined intervals as part of the safety management procedures

What should be considered in a risk assessment of Workplace Transport?

If you are doing a risk assessment you need to consider the following:

- ▲ Work activity – driving, loading, order-picking etc;
- ▲ Equipment to be used – vehicle, communications, PPE;
- ▲ Duration of the work – shift-based, intermittent, non-routine aspects;
- ▲ Location of the work activity i.e. layout, access routes, pedestrian segregation;
- ▲ Working environment, e.g. indoors /outdoors, lighting, seasonal changes;
- ▲ Condition and accessibility of work areas – access / egress, stability;
- ▲ Physical capabilities of the workers – age, gender, ability, eyesight.

What should the Workplace Transport Safety Management System include?

Vehicle safety in the workplace must be competently managed. The size and form of the management system will vary depending on the size of the operation - however it should address the following:

1. Definition of the policy and rules for the management of vehicles at the workplace and identification of responsible person for managing vehicle safety.
2. How to carry out and record risk assessments - this means writing down the most significant hazards, identifying who is at risk and listing the safety precautions which should be in place.
3. Determine the training needs of workforce and the preventative maintenance program required for ensuring ongoing workplace vehicle safety. Any changes to vehicles, workplace or personnel which might have implications for the safety of the system must be allowed for.
4. Employees who may be affected must be kept fully informed of the system and of any changes to it.
5. Details of how acceptable standards for workplace vehicle safety are achieved and should also be included in the site specific Safety Statement.

What areas need to be considered?

The Workplace

Layout of the place of work;

- ▲ Are vehicles and pedestrians kept safely apart?
- ▲ Are there suitable walkways for pedestrians?
- ▲ Are there suitable parking areas for all parking needs?
- ▲ Do the vehicle routes avoid sharp or blind bends?
- ▲ Is there scope for introducing a one-way system on vehicle routes within the workplace to reduce the risk of collisions?
- ▲ Are the lighting arrangements adequate both inside and outside?
- ▲ Where loading bays are longer than the width of five vehicles are appropriate numbers of exits or safe refuge points in place?

Suitability of traffic routes;

- ▲ Are they wide enough?
- ▲ Are they well constructed and maintained?
- ▲ Are they free from obstructions and other hazards?

Suitability / provision of safety features;

- ▲ Are roadways marked where necessary e.g. to indicate the right of way at road junctions?
- ▲ Is there a need for direction signs, speed limit signs, and, where applicable, signs such as 'Give Way', 'No Entry' etc.?

- ▲ Is there a need for features such as fixed mirrors to provide greater vision at blind bends, road humps to reduce vehicle-speeds, or barriers to keep vehicles and pedestrians apart?
- ▲ Is there adequate warning at the interface of the site with public areas?

The Vehicles

Vehicles at the workplace must be safe and suitable for the work application;

- ▲ Are vehicles purchased or leased with all the recommended safety features? This is particularly important when second-hand vehicles are purchased or leased.
- ▲ Are they provided with horns, lights, reflectors, reversing lights, alarms and other safety features as necessary?
- ▲ Are drivers protected against – impact, rollover, falling objects, hazardous environments such as cold, dust, fumes and excessive noise or vibration? Adequate ventilation must be provided where mobile work equipment with combustion engines are in use.
- ▲ Are there guards on dangerous parts of the vehicles, e.g. power take-offs, chains drives, exposed exhaust pipes?
- ▲ Is there a safe means of access to and exit from the cabs and other parts that need to be reached?

Vehicle inspection & maintenance

- ▲ Do drivers carry out basic safety checks before using vehicles?
- ▲ Is there a regular preventive maintenance programme for each vehicle, carried out at predetermined intervals as prescribed by the manufacturer / supplier, and is this recorded?
- ▲ How are defects reported and repairs assigned and reported?

Employee Selection, Training & Supervision

Drivers and other types of employee – including contractors - should be capable of performing their work activities in a safe and responsible manner. For example:

- ▲ Check the previous experience of drivers and test them to ensure that they are competent (on the job assessment is preferable)
- ▲ Provide training on how to do the job and information about particular hazards. Only competent persons permitted to operate self-propelled work equipment.
- ▲ Organise a planned programme of refresher training for drivers and other employees (an essential element of a safety programme) to ensure their continued competence.
- ▲ Do drivers drive with care, e.g. use the correct routes, drive within the speed limits at the site and follow any other site rules?
- ▲ Are employees using safe working practices, e.g. when loading/unloading, securing loads, carrying out maintenance etc.?
- ▲ Are supervisors, drivers and other employees, including contractors and visiting drivers, aware of their responsibilities in terms of maintaining a safe workplace and safe working practices?

▲Is everyone at the workplace supervised and held accountable for their responsibilities, and is there a clear system of controls when employers, contractors etc., fail to maintain standards?

Loading & Unloading Operations

▲Are loading/unloading operations carried out in an area away from passing traffic, pedestrians and others not involved in the loading/unloading operation?

▲Are the vehicles braked, chocked and/or stabilised, as appropriate, to prevent unsafe movements during loading and unloading operations?

▲Is the loading/unloading carried out so that, as far as possible, the load is spread evenly to avoid the vehicle or trailer becoming unstable?

▲Are checks made to ensure that loads are secured and stable so that they cannot move about, e.g. slide forward if the driver has to brake suddenly, or slide off if the vehicle has to negotiate steep inclines?

▲Are there checks to ensure that vehicles are not loaded beyond their capacity?

What Legislation applies?

Employers, the self-employed and employees must comply with the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act, 2005 and related regulations, in particular the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (General Application) Regulations 2007 - regarding use of work equipment at the place of work.

Employers and self-employed persons have a duty to provide a safe place of work and to provide and maintain safe systems of work. They must take all reasonable precautions to ensure the safety, not only of their workforce, but also of members of the public and others who might be affected by their activities.

▲Where employers share a workplace or, for example, a business park, they must cooperate and co-ordinate their activities to ensure they are safe.

▲All employees must take care of their own and others' safety and co-operate with management to comply with any necessary safety measures.

▲Employers must ensure that employees who drive vehicles are properly trained.

▲The self-employed must ensure that they themselves are properly trained.

▲Company directors may be prosecuted for failing to manage safety and health in an undertaking.

Where can I get further information?

Safety Health & Welfare at Work Act 2005 (Statutory Instrument No. 10 of 2005)

Safety Health & Welfare at Work (General Application) Regulations 2007 (Statutory Instrument No. 299 of 2007) and associated guidance documents.