

3663 First for Foodservice

Reduction in accidents thanks to vehicle changes

Reducing falls from vehicles case study 3

This case study is part of a series, which give examples of good practice to reduce injuries due to falls from vehicles through sensible management of health and safety risks in the workplace.

The challenge

A review of accident data at First for Foodservice, who distribute food to a variety of premises, uncovered that employees were experiencing problems accessing and working on their distribution vehicles.

Using this information the company looked closely at the vehicles to identify improvements.

What's changed?

- Employees were accessing refrigeration units above the driver's cab to adjust settings for the refrigerated box van on a daily basis. By specifying ground level controls on new vehicles employees no longer have to climb on the wheel and up a narrow ladder to gain access to them. Access equipment such as mobile work platforms or gantries can then be provided at site or at the repair depot for routine servicing or repairs on the equipment by engineers.



Figure 1 Access ladder to refrigeration equipment on old vehicles



Figure 2 New controls at ground level eliminating the need for a ladder.

- Slippery floors meant employees were finding it difficult to stay on their feet when moving cages of fresh, refrigerated and frozen food in and out of the vehicles. After trialling different combinations of footwear and floor coatings, a combination of slip resistant flooring and anti slip footwear was chosen to give the best slip resistance for these conditions.

Changes to the refrigeration system controls have improved temperature control and allowed defrosting of the evaporator coils during return trips to depot when the van was empty. Updated procedures have reduced the time that vehicle doors are open at the distribution depot to reduce condensation.

- Trailing electrical cables, used to provide power to the refrigeration equipment while vehicles were at the depot, were problematic. New trailing socket outlets are now installed, which are interlocked to the ignition circuit to prevent the vehicles being driven away with the power cable still connected.



Figure 3 New interlocked trailing leads

The results

New employees are being trained how to get in and out of vehicles. The importance of three-point contact at all times is emphasised.

Employees are pleased with the improved footwear and flooring in the load area of the refrigerated vehicles.

New power points are in place to avoid damage from vehicles and to reduce slip and trip hazards from trailing cables.



Figure 4 New socket outlets for refrigerated vehicles while parked

The company has seen a significant reduction in accidents.

The costs for implementation were minimised by upgrading of vehicles as and when they were replaced on the fleet.