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Target Audience  
AFQ Inspectors

## VEHICLE SHEETING AT WASTE MANAGEMENT SITES

This SIM provides information on circumstances where serious personal injury could occur as a result of falling whilst sheeting high sided vehicles in the waste industry. In this context the term 'sheeting' also includes unsheeting, netting/un-netting and any other similar means of covering or securing a load.

### BACKGROUND

1 Falls from vehicles account for 41% of workplace transport accidents and many of these occur in the waste industry during the sheeting of loads. The risks associated with sheeting occur not only at waste discharge sites, but also at premises where waste is collected from customers.

2 The risks from sheeting waste loads are not restricted to falls from the vehicle, but include falling into hidden voids when walking on the load, and contact with sharp items, bio waste etc. These risks are increased when sheeting takes place outdoors in low light levels or where weather conditions increase the risk of slipping.

3 Although some waste management companies have instituted effective policies and systems to reduce such risks, their adoption in the industry is by no means comprehensive.

4 Discussions have been held with the leading trade association, the Environmental Services Association (ESA) and the newly established Waste Industry Safety & Health Forum (WISH) following recent sheeting accidents. The Metals and Minerals Sector has worked with ESA to formulate their 'position statement' on such activities. This statement can be found on the [ESA](#) website. The statement advocates the provision of auto-sheeting systems to all high sided vehicles used in the transport of waste. However, working platforms and harness/gantry systems may comply with legal requirements where the risks can be demonstrably controlled.

### AUTOMATED SHEETING SYSTEMS

5 Recent advances have seen the adoption of vehicle mounted automated sheeting systems by many waste carriers. Many versions can be retrofitted to existing vehicles. These are slowly being introduced by some users as part of a purchasing and modernisation programme for reasons of both safety and economy. The speed and ease of sheeting permits an increased number of journeys to be made. The payback times for retrofitting autosheeters (costing £5-7,000) can be less than 9 months.

6 Containers fitted with integral sheeting arrangements provide an equivalent level of safety to vehicle mounted systems but, in practice, are less common. One vehicle mounted autosheeting system can cater for many different containers, but container mounted integral sheeting mechanisms need to be fitted to each individual container. The hinges of the sheeting frame can also be susceptible to damage during loading of the container.

7 The Metals and Minerals Sector fully supports the move to automated sheeting systems since they remove the risks listed at para 2.

#### WORKING PLATFORMS AND GANTRY/HARNESS ARRANGEMENTS

8 These can provide an acceptable standard of safety, but enforcement action may be appropriate if:

- (1) structures are not protected against vehicular damage;
- (2) walking across the load is required;
- (3) platform systems do not take into account differing vehicle heights and widths: falls onto the vehicle, or between vehicle and platform can occur;
- (4) harness systems are not coupled with appropriate training, maintenance and supervision to ensure correct use: this is particularly important where visiting drivers are expected to use the system.

9 Consideration should also be given to off-site vehicle sheeting where platforms or gantry/harness systems may not be available.

#### NATIONAL ENFORCEMENT EXPECTATIONS

10 Waste companies should be aware of the problems and have implemented a system which effectively minimises the risks associated with this work where persons can fall from a height, eg greater than 2 metres. Automated sheeting systems are the most effective option.

11 Economically, it is not possible for all hauliers of waste to ensure that their fleet is quickly fitted with auto-sheeting systems, nor is it always possible for waste companies to insist that their independent hauliers use them until the contract comes up for renewal. Some firms have instituted a lead-in time (say 2-3 years) so that all vehicles requiring sheeting will eventually be fitted with auto-sheeters.

12 The following guide on enforcement action is based on the Enforcement Management Module (EMM) version 2.0 and applies to situations where there is a risk of falling 2 metres or more with the potential to cause injury.

### **Immediate risk**

13 Immediate risk - if no regard has been given to the risk of falling more than 2 metres from a load being sheeted, then consideration should be given to issuing a prohibition notice (PN) in line with EMM section 2. Alternative methods of work could be considered for the immediate task if the risk is substantially reduced, eg mobile working platforms, but caution should be exercised by inspectors if the suggested alternative involves walking over the load where substantial voids could exist.

### **Benchmark standards and risk gap**

14 Benchmark standards and risk gap - benchmark standards for controlling the actual risk of falling will be no different to any other situation where this risk arises and are dealt with in the 'falls from height' inspection pack.

15 Risk assessments should have been carried out. (Compliance and administrative arrangements - EMM table 5.2).

16 A properly conducted risk assessment is likely to conclude that the elimination of working at height and walking on loads will remove the risk, and that automated sheeting systems are the preferred solution.

17 Inspectors should not object to the use of platforms or gantry/harness systems if the risks detailed above are demonstrably controlled. Inspectors should make their own assessments of actual risk, and the risk gap. Their assessment of risk should be based on the factors they find on site.

### **ACTION BY INSPECTORS**

18 Inspectors should check this risk at their visits to waste management sites as part of the priority hazard work on transport. Details of good or novel solutions that companies have developed should be fed back to the Metals and Minerals Sector: Metals Group.

### **REFERENCES**

19 Note that Booklet HS(G) 148 has been withdrawn. The examples of manual sheeting given at Appendix 3 are not acceptable since edge protection is not provided at the sides and ends of the container. Walking across loads where voids could exist is not an acceptable working practice.

20 Date first issued: 27 March 2002