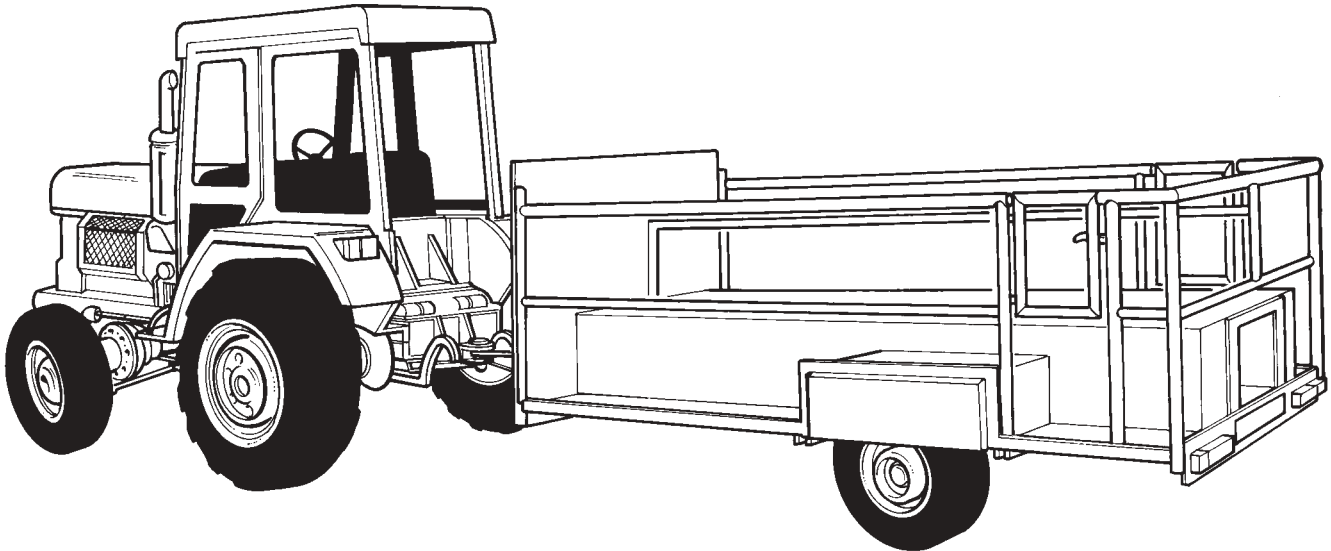




Carriage of passengers on farm trailers

Agriculture Information Sheet No 36



Introduction

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) investigated three deaths and 31 serious injuries between 1986 and 1999 that were a direct result of carrying passengers on farm trailers. Whenever people are transported around the farm, the vehicle they are being carried on must be suitable for the purpose and a safe system of work (safe working practices) must be followed.

This information sheet is aimed at anyone who uses a trailer to move people around on a farm and sets out the features, related to the circumstances of use, a trailer should have if it is used for carrying passengers.

It only considers on-farm use (ie away from the public highway). Travelling on the public highway with passengers on a trailer may be an offence under road traffic legislation. If you intend doing this you should consult the police to establish any further precautions you should take. Remember that parts of the road traffic legislation apply to any area to which the public have access (eg farm driveways with a public footpath).

Towing vehicle

The tractor or other towing vehicle:

- must be maintained in effective working order, in particular the steering, the brakes (both parking and service) and the tyres;

- should have the facility to operate trailer brakes, preferably direct from the service brakes, but where this is not possible then from the hydraulic services;
- should be correctly and securely coupled to the trailer being used. In particular, the hitch of the tractor should be compatible with the trailer drawbar connection (eg hook and eye, clevis to drawbar) and all necessary securing pins should be in place.

The driver of the towing vehicle should be a mature, competent, and responsible person. Adequate training should have taken place to ensure competence and care should be taken to ensure that the driver is sufficiently mature, particularly if they are less than 18 years old. Remember that young people may require greater training and supervision.

Trailer

- The trailer should be in sound condition and maintained in effective working order, including in particular the tyres and brakes, the floor and sides of the trailer and the connection to the tractor (eg pick-up ring or drawbar).
- It should not be possible for a driver or a passenger to contact the wheels (or tracks) from any position in which they may be riding (ie on either the towing or towed vehicle).

- Brakes (either hydraulic or air) should be fitted on at least one axle of the trailer. They should be connected directly to the tractor's service brakes. If this is not possible, they should be readily operated from the normal driving position (eg the tractor seat).
- Tail-lighting systems, in full working order, should be fitted to both the towing and trailed vehicles, especially direction indicators. (These are the vehicle's normal 'road-going' lights.)
- When passengers are to be carried after dark, provide effective lights that will illuminate the access/egress areas and the area of the trailer used by passengers. (This is additional lighting to aid visibility on the trailer.) Hand-held lights or torches are not suitable for this.
- Do not use trailers in circumstances where overturn is foreseeable.

Trailers in regular use for workers or for carrying members of the public

The following advice applies to trailers used for regularly transporting workers (such as labour gangs) or for carrying members of the public (eg on student farm tours, to PYO fields, school visits etc):

- Seating should be provided which provides back support and is secured to the trailer floor. It should allow all passengers, including children, to sit with their feet on the trailer floor. Seating should preferably face outwards or forwards. If this is not the case (ie passengers face inwards) back support can be provided by the trailer sides (including rear and front).
- Back support should be at 'sitting shoulder height' - 600 mm above the seat for an average man. This will vary for children (depending on age) and may be as little as 350 mm for the average four year old.
- Trailer edges should be protected to prevent passengers from falling. Any headboards, tailboards, sides or guard rails should be secured in position. All sides/guard rails should be strong enough to support an adult's weight without damage or permanent distortion. (Guard rails etc should be able to withstand a minimum horizontal force of 1000 N.) In the case of guard rails/sides which passengers lean on when seated, the rail should be able to support the weight of the total number of people who are likely to lean on them.
- Solid headboards, tailboards or sides should be at least 920 mm high. If the edges are protected by a guard rail it should be not less than 920 mm or

more than 1070 mm high. There should be an intermediary rail between 460 mm and 535 mm, and a toeboard not less than 75 mm high should be fitted at the exposed edges. Any opening provided for access should provide a similar level of protection when closed during transport.

- If young children are carried (eg under-school-age children travelling with casual workers, or school children on a tour) then the sides should be infilled (eg with weld mesh or similar).
- There should be a safe means of access to and egress from the trailer. This could consist of a fixed ladder or steps, with the lowest rung or step no more than 550 mm above ground level. There should be a secure handhold at the top between 920 mm and 1070 mm above the trailer floor level to help people mounting or dismounting from the trailer. The access position should be behind the trailer wheels.
- If a portable ladder is used, it should be rigid and strong enough for the purpose and secured in position before being used. (It should accompany the trailer when it is being used to transport passengers.)
- Nothing other than the passengers and their personal tools and effects should be carried on the trailer, ie there should be no goods, equipment or loads in transit.
- Trailers that are regularly used for carrying passengers should be clearly marked with the maximum number of people that can be carried.

Trailers used for workers on an exceptional basis

For trailers used to carry workers to or from a worksite on a one-off basis, the above criteria should be applied as far as possible. If they cannot reasonably be met, then the minimum standards to be achieved are:

- People should be able to sit down (either on seating or on the floor of the trailer) and any seating should be secured to the trailer floor. If bales form the seats, they should ideally be placed in the centre of the trailer so that people can sit back to back, and they should be secured in position by ropes or other effective means.
- There should be a headboard, tailboard and sides to prevent people falling. The sides, headboard and tailboard should be to a height at least 470 mm above the surface upon which a person is sitting.
- No one should ride standing in the trailer unless the sides are sufficiently high that it is safer to do

so (eg in a high-sided grain trailer where sides are around standing chest height and provide a secure handhold).

- No one should ride seated on the top edges of sides/headboard/tailboard or with their legs hanging over the side of the trailer.
- No one should be carried on a laden or partially laden trailer if movement of the load could cause injury either directly (eg by crushing) or indirectly (eg by causing a fall). If people do ride on a load they should be sitting and the sides of the trailer should be at least 470 mm higher than the load.
- Means of access should be provided. This can be either permanently attached steps/ladders or a portable ladder that can be secured in position. Means of access provided by manufacturers on new trailers are acceptable to meet this requirement.

Safe system of work

- A responsible person should travel on the trailer to control and help the passengers. (More than one person may be required if the passengers are groups of children.) The driver should not carry out this task as well as his driving duties.
- For school parties the teacher or parental supervisor should not be the only responsible person travelling on the trailer - farm staff should also be on board.
- The responsible person should ensure that the number of passengers does not exceed the capacity of the trailer.
- If the only passengers are workers, one of them should be appointed as the responsible person.
- There should be an effective and efficient system of communication provided between the responsible person and the driver, clearly understood by both parties, for starting and stopping travel (eg two-way radio, bell signal etc). The driver should not move the trailer without first receiving instructions or signals from the responsible person to do so.
- All passengers, including the responsible person, should remain seated during the journey. No one should be allowed to mount or dismount from the trailer while it is moving.
- Mounting and dismounting from the trailer should take place in a quiet and safe area, away from other traffic, if possible. (If not, then suitable barriers should be provided to prevent people,

especially young children, from running into danger.)

- If workers are to be carried to a worksite on an empty trailer that will subsequently be loaded and returning with a load, alternative arrangements will have to be made for the workers' return journey.
- The driver should drive within speeds which will not jolt the passengers or cause them to be thrown around and should avoid any sudden speed changes.

Legal requirements

The Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 (section 3) requires employers and the self-employed to take reasonably practicable precautions in relation to the safety of non-employees who may be affected by the work activity.

The Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998¹ (PUWER 98) put duties on employers, the self-employed and workers in relation to work equipment.

The regulations that have specific requirements on carrying passengers on trailers are:

- regulation 4 which requires work equipment to be suitable for the purpose for which it is used. This can be achieved either by the original design of the equipment or by proper modification to make it fit for purpose;
- regulation 9 which requires the driver of the towing vehicle to be adequately trained;
- regulation 25 which requires any equipment used for carrying people to be suitable for the purpose and requires that there are features to reduce the risk from contact with the wheels or tracks as low as reasonably practicable;
- regulation 26 which states that where there is a risk of injury in an overturn the risk is controlled by various means including stabilising the equipment or by providing a roll-over protective structure.

References

- 1 *Safe use of work equipment. Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998. Approved Code of Practice and guidance* L22 HSE Books 1998 ISBN 0 7176 1626 6

Further information

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This leaflet contains notes on good practice which are not compulsory but which you may find helpful in considering what you need to do.

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