

Health and safety

# in road haulage





## ■ INTRODUCTION

Do you employ people in general haulage and warehousing, wholesale and retail distribution, or specialised haulage such as car transport, bulk materials and bulk liquids? Each of these may have particular hazards but in every industry where deliveries are made drivers are exposed to significant hazards arising simply from the day-to-day activities of the job.

The information in this leaflet is one step towards helping all employers in road haulage and distribution, especially those running small and medium-sized businesses, do a better job of ensuring their employees' health and safety.

Although it draws on information from the haulage and distribution industry, almost everything here will apply to every operator of commercial vehicles.

## ■ IS THERE A PROBLEM?

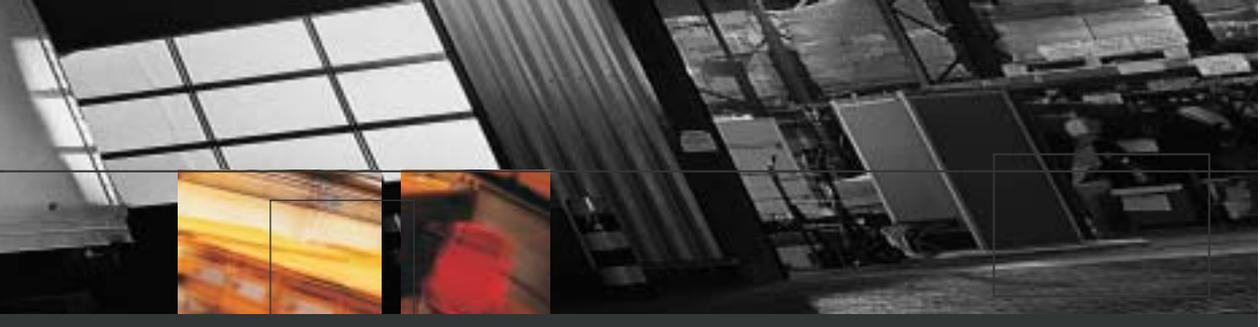
Over the last five years, accident reports sent to HSE and local authorities show that nearly 60 employees were killed and 5000 seriously injured in haulage and distribution - simply doing their job. Another 23 000 suffered injuries severe enough to keep them off work more than three days. These figures take no account of work-related ill health, for example from bad backs or stress.

This represents a higher rate of accidents to employees than either construction or agriculture, both widely regarded as hazardous industries.

## ■ MANAGING HEALTH AND SAFETY

Health and safety is seen by many people as so much paperwork, red tape, expense and boring rules and regulations that are difficult to understand and stop you running your business easily.

Even if you don't think this way, many people in business believe that because they have had few or no accidents all that is needed is basic common sense and



that, in any case, most common accidents these days are unavoidable.

Relying on people to use their common sense works fine until something does go wrong. When that means someone gets killed or seriously injured, it can suddenly look a bit of an inadequate approach. Too many employers live to regret not taking health and safety more seriously before an accident, rather than after one of their employees has been badly injured at work.

Controlling health and safety risks is not that difficult. It can be achieved with a little effort, needn't cost a lot and doing it right can make good business sense. If nothing else, there can be benefits from reduced claims for compensation and lower insurance premiums.

## ■ WHERE TO START

Understanding the sorts of things that result in injury and ill health can help you recognise the activities most likely to lead to harm. By concentrating on these initially, rather than feeling overwhelmed by the maze of laws, practical steps can be taken to put controls in place. If you follow these you will find you are also well on the way to complying with the law.

### Deaths at work

Almost all deaths arise from just four kinds of accident, most often during loading and unloading or maintenance of vehicles:

- being struck by a moving vehicle;
- falling loads;
- falls from vehicles;
- collapsing or overturning vehicles.

Issues such as use of handbrakes, safe positioning of drivers during loading and unloading with fork-lift trucks, propping of vehicles during repair work and climbing up on vehicles have to be tackled.



## Major injuries

Again, most injuries (more than seven out of ten) are due to just four causes:

- slips and trips;
- being struck by moving or falling objects;
- falls from less than 2 m; and
- manual handling.

Most of these happen to drivers during loading and unloading, though many slips occur during other work.

## Other reportable injuries

Manual handling and slips and trips account for two-thirds of other reportable injuries. Addressing these two areas clearly has the greatest potential for reducing the number of such injuries each year.

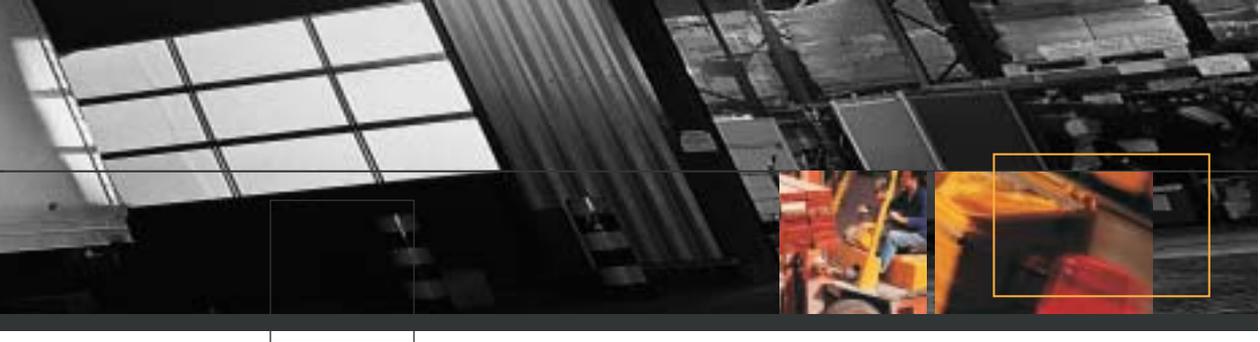
## Other issues

There are other subjects to consider apart from those causing most of the accidents, such as workshop safety, display screen equipment and maintenance of plant and machinery. While these cannot be ignored, they do not contribute to the bulk of accidents and attention should initially be mainly focussed on the areas actually causing most harm if the overall picture is to be improved.

## ■ WHAT YOU NEED TO DO

Many of these accidents could be prevented by simply examining what actually goes on in your business, removing and controlling hazards as far as possible and taking the necessary managerial and supervisory steps to make sure what is supposed to happen does happen.

This means looking at what people do at work as well as finding out what controls are needed. The process can be broken down into a number of steps to help translate theory into practice. This is basically all 'risk assessment' and



'managing safety' are about - no more than a structured approach to solving a problem and controlling risk.

Do not be put off by the language. A hazard is simply something that can cause harm. Risk is the chance of anyone suffering harm from a hazard. For example, a slippery path is a hazard. The more slippery it is and the more people who walk along it, the greater the risk of someone falling and being injured.

You should focus your efforts on practical control and improvements where needed, not on lots of paperwork or forms for their own sake. Simple records of what you have done can help but remember that if risks are not controlled and things do go wrong, paper alone will not be of any value.

## ■ ORGANISATION

You first need someone who is actually going to do this work. It need not be a legal or health and safety specialist. An appreciation of what happens, and what hazards and risks there are in your business, is essential. Information on the level of practical control needed is also important.

Once you or your nominated person has got all this clear, it helps to rank any problems in priority order for action, depending on the likely chance of something going wrong and how serious it may be if it did.

A plan setting out what needs to be done can make the task less daunting and provides a starting point for action rather than letting things drift. Someone with enough authority should be responsible for the plan and checking that it is taken forward. Checks are also needed to ensure that any precautions or procedures actually work and are used.



## WHERE TO GET INFORMATION ON RISKS AND CONTROLS

A great deal of written guidance is available from HSE. This has been produced to help employers and employees reduce accidents and ill health at work. The 'Further reading' section contains details of some titles that may be useful. The HSE Infoline is a mine of useful information. It is run by independent contractors on behalf of HSE, which reassures many people who are hesitant about approaching HSE for advice directly. There is also the HSE website (please see 'Further information' for details), which has a haulage-specific portal that will be developed over time.

Members will find the Freight Transport Association Yearbook and the Road Haulage Association Handbook contain useful summaries of legal requirements and practical advice. Trade unions produce drivers' handbooks that are also helpful.

Looking at your own company accident records and near-miss reports (if recorded) can be valuable, while simply speaking to employees and looking at the work that goes on can often be the best source of information. Remember there are legal duties to consult employees or their representatives. Many employers have found that involving employees in this way - to eliminate or control risks - has been invaluable.

Every company will be different but the following checklist of general topics indicates the sorts of things you should be concerned about. It also gives you an idea of what is needed to minimise risks and comply with the law.



## ■ HEALTH AND SAFETY CHECKLIST

Many of the following questions apply to both drivers themselves and others who work at depots and delivery sites. Are you doing enough to make sure that risks at your own site and those your drivers visit are properly controlled?

### Workplace transport risks

- Do drivers have a safe place to wait during loading and unloading and can they get there without passing through areas of vehicle movement?
- Are security and loading staff made aware of the dangers of moving vehicles?
- Is reversing minimised? If it is unavoidable, are alternative measures taken, such as use of additional mirrors on vehicles, CCTV or a suitably trained guide?
- Is there a clear one-way system and are there pedestrian/vehicle routes (not a big area of tarmac with people and vehicles everywhere)?
- Would a driver arriving at a site know where to go, where to park safely and how to make contact with someone at the premises?
- Do vehicle routes have sharp or blind bends/corners? Are they wide enough and properly maintained? Who plans all this? Who checks all this?
- Are all FLT drivers trained, certified and regularly monitored?
- Are all FLTs in good condition?
- Do all vehicles and trailers have effective service and parking brakes and are there clear instructions on how and when to apply them?
- Have you considered alarms that sound if the handbrake is left off? Several drivers are killed every year simply because their vehicles move off when the handbrake is left off when parked.
- Are all drivers experienced and do you test them to check their competence?
- Are stabilisers always used when operating lorry-mounted cranes?
- Do drivers always use trailer parking brakes and not rely on disconnecting the red line?
- Are tipping vehicle bodies always propped when people work under them or under tilting cabs?



## Falls risks

- Do you know what work at height goes on, eg roof work, painting, high-level storage, work in warehouse racking?
- Is safe access provided?
- Are sheeting operations carried out with as little climbing on lorries as possible?
- Are vehicle transporters fitted with guardrails on the upper deck?
- Is there an inspection, maintenance and report procedure for all equipment such as ropes, straps, curtains, sheets, nets etc to ensure they are safe to use?
- Is there safe access to bulk-storage diesel tanks?
- Are steps fitted for access to the bed of all vehicles and are they used rather than drivers jumping down or climbing up?
- Are yards well lit, well maintained with an even surface and free of slipping and tripping hazards?
- Are vehicle, trailer and cab access steps all kept in good condition?

## Manual handling risks

- Have all manual handling tasks been identified and eliminated where possible?
- For those tasks remaining, have mechanical aids been provided and training carried out?
- Are there safe means of opening and closing trailer curtains?
- Are there systems for checking whether a load has shifted in transit and for dealing with bulging loads on curtain-sided vehicles?
- Are all drivers familiar with safe loading and unloading procedures?
- Do you and your drivers know what hazards they may be exposed to and what rules they should follow at customer sites?



## ■ CASE STUDIES

The following summaries show how some people met their deaths. Could they happen in your business? All of these happened to experienced, mature people.

- A driver fell 2.8 m from a tipper lorry while trying to sheet load.
- A driver was crushed when a lorry rolled back into a sloping loading bay. The handbrake was off.
- A transport manager was crushed against the cab of another vehicle when a lorry reversed.
- A warehouse worker was crushed when directing a reversing lorry.
- A driver was crushed by a fork-lift truck while coiling ropes next to a lorry.
- A driver was crushed by a load of aluminium that collapsed during loading.
- A driver was crushed between his and another vehicle after it ran away while the trailer was being coupled.
- A driver was crushed between two vehicles while unloading.

## ■ LEGAL CONSEQUENCES

Poor control may result in action from HSE or local authorities. Transport risks, falls from height and manual handling are all priority areas for enforcing authorities, and all are common causes of accidents in road haulage. Fines of up to £20 000 can be imposed for breaches of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974, with unlimited fines and imprisonment possible if cases are heard in higher courts. Directors and managers can face prosecution as individuals if their acts or omissions led to the offence.

HSE and local authority inspectors will be looking closely at all work activities that cause most harm, including transport, work at height and simple slips and trips. Acting to control such risks will help save you falling foul of the law.

Remember, revocation of your operating licence is a possibility when offences come to the attention of the Traffic Commissioners.



## **INDUSTRY LINKS WITH HSE AND LOCAL AUTHORITIES**

This leaflet has been produced by people from HSE, local authorities, professional bodies and representatives of employers and employees working together to help businesses tackle industry issues, in order to reduce accidents and ill health at work.

If you have any problems, questions, or practical tips or ideas on how to help improve health and safety standards then contact us through your trade association or union. The Road Haulage Association, Freight Transport Association, Institute of Logistics and Transport, TGWU, and United Road Transport Union are all members.



## ■ FURTHER READING

*Workplace transport safety: Guidance for employers* HSG136

HSE Books 1995 ISBN 0 7176 0935 9

*Safety in working with lift trucks* HSG6 (Third edition)

HSE Books 2000 ISBN 0 7176 1781 5

*Managing vehicle safety at the workplace: A short guide for employers* Leaflet

INDG199 HSE Books 1995 (single copy free or priced packs of 10

ISBN 0 7176 0982 0)

*Reversing vehicles* Leaflet INDG148 HSE Books 1993 (single copy free or priced packs of 15 ISBN 0 7176 1063 2)

*Parking large goods vehicles safely: Guidance for drivers on coupling and uncoupling large goods vehicles (LGVs)* Leaflet INDG312

HSE Books 2000 (single copy free)

*Sheeting and unsheeting of non-tipper lorries* CRR305

HSE Books 2000 ISBN 0 7176 1891 9

*Freight Transport Association Yearbook*

Available from: Freight Transport Association, Hermes House, St Johns Road, Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN4 9UZ Tel: 01892 526171

*Road Haulage Association Manual*

Available from: Road Haulage Association, Roadway House, Bretton Way, Bretton, Peterborough PE3 8DD Tel: 01733 263434

## ■ HSE/FTA ADVICE LINE

You can contact the Workplace Transport Safety Advice Centre on:

0870 099 0099

## FURTHER INFORMATION

HSE priced and free publications are available by mail order from  
HSE Books, PO Box 1999, Sudbury, Suffolk CO10 2WA  
Tel: 01787 881165 Fax: 01787 313995 Website: [www.hsebooks.co.uk](http://www.hsebooks.co.uk)  
(HSE priced publications are also available from bookshops and free leaflets  
can be downloaded from HSE's website: [www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk).)

For information about health and safety ring HSE's Infoline  
Tel: 08701 545500 Fax: 02920 859260  
e-mail: [hseinformationservices@natbrit.com](mailto:hseinformationservices@natbrit.com) or write to  
HSE Information Services, Caerphilly Business Park, Caerphilly CF83 3GG.

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

This leaflet is available in priced packs of 15 from HSE Books,  
ISBN 0 7176 2765 9. Single free copies are also available from HSE Books.

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