

Vehicles - Driver Standards

Level 3 Health and Safety in the Workplace

Introduction

As seen in the previous module of the course, ensuring that your workplace has the relevant signs and signals in place is essential for controlling vehicle hazards.

However, it is also important that the vehicles you choose to use are designed and maintained properly, and that your drivers are trained well enough to do their jobs safely.

This section - part two of vehicles - covers the expected standards and abilities of your vehicle operators.

Topics to be Covered

The topics covered in this section are:

- Vehicle design
- Vehicle maintenance
- Vehicle immobilisation
- Driver standards
- Training drivers
- Reversing
- Signallers
- Deliveries

Vehicle Design

PUWER states that all employers must make sure that work equipment, including vehicles, is suitable for the purpose for which it is provided or used. To ensure vehicles are safe for use:

- They should be stable and provide a safe way to get into and out of the cab and any other parts of the vehicle that need regular access. Vehicle access features, such as ladders, steps and walkways must be safe to use.
- They should have seats and seat belts, or other restraints where necessary, that are safe and comfortable. Where appropriate, vehicles should have protection for drivers against falling objects or the vehicle overturning.
- Dangerous vehicle parts, such as power take-off, chain drives and exposed hot exhaust pipes, should have guards.
- Drivers should be able to see clearly around their vehicle so they can spot and avoid hazards. CCTV systems and special mirrors can help them to see around and behind their vehicles.

Additional ways to ensure vehicles are safe for use include:

- Vehicle lights, reversing lights, a horn or other warning devices can help people near the vehicle know it is moving. Bright painting and marking also help a vehicle to stand out.
- Ensure vehicles are suitable for any loads carried. There must be well-placed anchor points that are strong enough to allow the load to be properly secured. When replacing worn load-retention strapping, de-mountable lifting chains or lifting cables, replace the entire set. This prevents any large differences in strength.
- Where necessary, provide drivers with properly engineered weather protection.
- No one should be allowed to climb on or around parts of the vehicle that are not designed to support them, and no one should do anything that might make them slip and accidentally operate the vehicle's controls.

Vehicle Maintenance

Vehicles should be maintained so that they remain mechanically sound at all times. Certain equipment, such as fork-lift trucks, tail lifts and lifting slings, must be thoroughly examined by a competent person and a record should be kept of what was found.

Planned inspections are an important part of maintenance. These can range from basic safety checks by drivers before using the vehicle, such as checking that the tyres are properly inflated, to regular maintenance inspections carried out based on time or mileage.

It is also a good idea to provide drivers with a list of daily checks to sign off for their vehicles.

Preventative maintenance is needed to help avoid failures during use. This should be thorough, regular and frequent enough to meet the manufacturer's guidance. Pay special attention to:

- The braking system.
- The steering system.
- Tyres.
- Mirrors.
- Windscreen washers and wipers.
- Any warning devices.
- Specific safety systems.
- Racking and securing points for ropes.
- Any hydraulic or pneumatic systems.

If you find that particular failures happen frequently, then you should look at why this is and how the frequency can be reduced. Look at the system of work, operator training and the maintenance schedule and then make appropriate changes.

Vehicle Immobilisation

Immobilisation means ensuring that the vehicle cannot move. It is important that vehicles do not move when they are parked, during loading and unloading, or during any other operations when the vehicle should remain stationary.

When runaway vehicle accidents happen, they often cause severe injuries to people nearby. Even in situations where no one is hurt, there is likely to be significant and expensive damage to the vehicle, buildings or other plant.

All vehicles, whether road-going or specialist workplace vehicles, should have suitable brakes, both for general service and for parking. These should be used properly to immobilise the vehicle whenever there is a risk of it running away.

Trailers should always have the parking brake applied before uncoupling or coupling. Never rely on the emergency brakes.

If outriggers are provided to stabilise vehicles during loading or unloading, fitting them with plates rather than wheels will increase contact with the ground and make them more effective.

On many vehicles, the outriggers are only intended to stabilise, so the wheels need to stay on the ground to support the load and provide braking. On these vehicles, make sure that operators do not over-extend the stabilisers and lift the wheels off the ground.

Where manufacturers provide wheel chocks, these should be used at all times when the vehicle is parked or during loading and unloading. Information on chocking should be provided with the vehicle's operating instructions.

Alarm systems are available which make a sound if the driver attempts to leave the vehicle cab without applying the handbrake.

These systems can help to make runaway accidents less likely when the tractive unit is connected. However, they will not make sure that semi-trailer brakes are applied and are not a complete solution for preventing runaways.

Furthermore, a different tractive unit may be involved which is not fitted with an alarm, so driver checks for properly applied brakes are still important.

Driver Standards

Every driver, and particularly younger or less experienced drivers, should be instructed to drive and work in a responsible and careful manner.

Drivers should be capable of operating their vehicle and related equipment safely, and should receive appropriate instruction and training.

Employers and managers should never allow anyone who is unfit through drink or drugs to drive a vehicle. In a recent study of deaths and injuries involving site dumpers, fewer than half of the employers had bothered to check the drivers' competence.

Where the workplace has contractors or visiting drivers, the site operator or principal employer should check that they are fully competent to carry out their duties responsibly and carefully. For example, by obtaining evidence of competence from the drivers or their employers.

There are two main ways of ensuring competence for a job:

1. **Make sure new recruits know what they're doing.** Have recruitment and placement procedures that ensure all employees and managers are competent or can learn the necessary competencies on the job.
2. **Ensure the competence of existing employees.** Make sure that existing employees have the skills and experience needed for safety and that they maintain them. If their work changes, make sure they are competent for their new work.

Training Drivers

Training needs will depend on an individual's previous experience and the type of work they will be doing. The risk assessment should help determine the level and amount of training needed for each task and each worker.

Newly recruited drivers will usually have the greatest training needs, but you should have an ongoing programme of refresher training for all workers to ensure their continued competence in a changing workplace.

Furthermore, check that the information given by new employees about their work experience is true. For example, check that references to training schemes are supported by certificates. Test employees onsite, even when they produce evidence of previous training or related work experience.

Training will need to cover:

- General information about the job, such as route layouts and how to report risks or accidents.
- Training and/or checks to ensure that drivers can work safely, including making sure they know how to operate the vehicle safely, and providing information about particular dangers, speed limits, parking and loading areas, and procedures.
- How supervision arrangements, including disciplinary measures for health and safety breaches, will be applied.

Always check that trainees understand what they have been told and keep training records for each employee.

Consider keeping a central register of who in your workplace is competent to control which vehicle, as this will make safely allocating tasks and keeping track of abilities much easier.

Reversing

Nearly a quarter of all deaths involving vehicles at work occur while vehicles are reversing. If not done carefully, reversing can also cause costly damage to vehicles, equipment and premises.

The most effective way to reduce the risks from reversing is to remove the need for it altogether by setting up a one-way system, such as drive-through loading and unloading.

Where reversing is unavoidable, organise routes to minimise the need for it. Any single measure is unlikely to be enough to ensure safety, so you will probably need a combination of measures.

Make sure that all visiting drivers report their arrival and receive instructions about the site layout and rules. If visiting drivers are unfamiliar with English, provide basic safety information in the language that they use, or as graphics.

On sites where reversing is unavoidable:

- Reversing areas should be planned out, clearly marked and visible to drivers and anyone else in the area.
- People who do not need to be in reversing areas should be kept well clear.
- Portable radios or similar communication systems can be helpful on some sites.
- Increase visibility for drivers and pedestrians by increasing the area allowed for reversing, installing fixed mirrors in smaller areas, keeping vehicle mirrors clean and in good repair, and fitting refractive lenses to vehicle rear windows, or rear-view CCTV, to help drivers to see behind the vehicle.

If vehicle reversing alarms are fitted, they should be kept in working order and should be loud and distinct enough to be heard above background noise.

In some circumstances, for example where a reversing alarm might not be easy to hear, visible systems such as flashing warning lights can be used.

Other safety devices can also be fitted to vehicles, such as 'sensing' or 'trip' systems, which either warn the driver or stop the reversing vehicle when it comes close to or touches an obstruction.

Physical stops, such as barriers or buffers at loading bays, can be used but they should be highly visible and sensibly positioned.

Lateral white lines on the floor can help the driver position the vehicle accurately. Where vehicles reverse up to structures or edges, barriers or wheel stops can be used to warn drivers that they need to stop.

When a vehicle has no rear-viewing aids to help with reversing, the driver may only be able to check behind the vehicle by leaving the cab. Drivers should remember that this could be unsafe.

In some industries, such as quarrying, employers may forbid drivers from leaving their vehicles as it is especially dangerous.

Visual checking can also be unreliable, as someone may walk behind the vehicle after the driver has returned to the cab.

If it is unavoidable, drivers should look after their own safety when leaving the cab and take all possible care when reversing.

Signallers

Many employers use a trained signaller - a banksman - to keep the reversing area free of pedestrians and to guide drivers. However, this is not always the best option, as it places the banksman in the risk area.

Some employers, such as in quarries, prohibit the use of signallers due to the size of the vehicles involved and the difficulty that drivers have in seeing them.

Signallers are always at risk because they must work close to moving vehicles. Before using one, employers should assess the risks they will be exposed to and take precautions to protect them.

Only properly trained signallers should be used. If a driver loses sight of a signaller, they should stop the vehicle immediately.

A signaller should:

- Use a clear system of signalling, agreed with the driver before starting.
- Be visible to the driver at all times.
- Stand in a safe position where they can guide the reversing vehicle without being in its way.
- Wear highly visible clothing, such as reflective or fluorescent vests, and make sure that any signals are clearly seen.

Note that 'banksman' and 'signaller' are often used to mean the same thing: a person who signals to a driver to guide the manoeuvring of their vehicle. Traditionally, a banksman would direct lifting operations for a crane operator, but the use of the term has widened and now it is often used to refer to vehicle signallers.

Deliveries

Deliveries and collections can be some of the most dangerous transport activities. A significant number of transport accidents in the workplace take place during deliveries.

As far as possible, parking, loading and unloading should be off the road or pavement and well away from the public. Where this is not possible, remember that health and safety law still covers these work activities and they must be carried out with care.

Consider any risks to members of the public who drive or walk near the vehicle and include this in the risk assessment.

Where possible, present the side of the vehicle with easiest access to the workplace and lay the site out so that reversing is unnecessary.

Where reversing is unavoidable, try to make it as safe as possible and consider using a competent and authorised signaller with appropriate, high-visibility equipment.

When manoeuvring on public roads, remember that public traffic and pedestrians have priority, and that signallers have no legal authority to stop traffic on a public highway. If cones or barriers are to be used, discuss this with the local police and highway authority and don't direct pedestrians onto the road.

If using lift trucks, make sure drivers are aware of the increased risk of turnover from driving over kerbs or over road cambers, and make sure they know the correct driving procedures for these conditions.

If articulated vehicles are being coupled or uncoupled, check that drivers know how to park them. Ensure that drivers understand the correct use of parking and hand brakes and that they use them when appropriate.

Make sure that drivers receive adequate safety information for each delivery or collection beforehand, such as restrictions on the types of vehicles the site can handle or hazards such as one-way systems and low bridges.

If possible, provide drivers with a site plan including parking, the location of reception, the route through the site, the location of unloading areas and driver waiting areas, as well as written information on procedures for visiting drivers, such as wearing high-visibility vests, limits on mobile phone usage, prohibitions or special conditions for reversing, such as using a banksman.

Set up simple systems for reporting any vehicle accidents, incidents, near misses and other safety concerns during delivery and collection. Exchange the information with all the other parties involved and take action on the reports.

All drivers should be trained in general safety precautions so that they can deal with unexpected situations and understand what to do if they are not satisfied with the safety arrangements when visiting sites. You could give them simple safety checklists to help them evaluate site safety.

Make sure drivers and site staff also know what to do if a load appears to have shifted in transit.

If you receive deliveries, consider giving responsibility for authorising unloading to a specific employee who will be present during the process. They should have the authority to refuse or halt unloading if there are safety problems, and should be confident that a decision to refuse delivery will be supported by management.

Employers of delivery drivers should give drivers the authority to refuse or stop unloading or loading on safety grounds, and should tell customers that their drivers have this authority.

The law requires employers to ensure that all lifting operations are properly planned by a competent person, appropriately supervised and carried out in a safe manner.

Make sure that lifting equipment is suitable for the task, marked with its safe working load, properly maintained and inspected and receives a periodic thorough examination.

Everyone should be aware of what to do if they are not happy with safety arrangements and should have contact details for the other parties in case of problems.

If agreement on how significant safety issues will be dealt with cannot be reached, the delivery or collection should not take place. Delivery safety arrangements should be considered, and if possible agreed, before orders are taken or placed.

Make sure drivers receive adequate safety information for each delivery or collection beforehand.

Assemble a general safety information sheet or pack which can be sent to anyone in the supply chain, along with any specific safety arrangements for specific deliveries.

If a site regularly receives deliveries from particular suppliers or carriers, it may be reasonable for the parties involved to assess the site in advance and produce agreed plans and procedures, including written instructions for drivers and site staff. However, if a particular delivery will be different from usual, it should not go ahead until the procedures have been reviewed, revised if necessary and agreed by all parties involved.

Exercise

Are the following statements true or false?

Only vehicles that are prone to overturning need safety belts or restraints	<input type="radio"/> True	<input checked="" type="radio"/> False
Drivers should check the safety of their vehicles every day	<input checked="" type="radio"/> True	<input type="radio"/> False
Runaway accidents can be avoided if drivers always use the appropriate brakes	<input checked="" type="radio"/> True	<input type="radio"/> False
Drivers who have worked for the company a long time will have the greatest training needs	<input type="radio"/> True	<input checked="" type="radio"/> False
Drivers should always leave their vehicles to check behind them before reversing	<input type="radio"/> True	<input checked="" type="radio"/> False
If a banksman is used, they must be visible to the driver at all times	<input checked="" type="radio"/> True	<input type="radio"/> False
Loading and unloading activities should take place close to pedestrian walkways	<input type="radio"/> True	<input checked="" type="radio"/> False

Summary

In this module, you've learnt that the standards and abilities of vehicle operators are just as crucial for health and safety as the vehicles themselves.

You've also learnt that all vehicles should have appropriate seats and seat belts/restraints, have a stable and safe way for drivers to get into and out of the cab, and dangerous parts should be covered by guards.

Vehicle drivers should be suitably trained and understand how to use their vehicle safely. It's a good idea to provide drivers with a list of daily checks to sign off each day, and ensure they have knowledge of how to park, load and unload safely, use the brakes, improve visibility, and reverse safely.

Information on the road safety rules of your particular workplace should also be provided to all visiting drivers, including delivery drivers.