

# **Workplace Transport Safety**

## **Introduction**

Every year up to half of all fatal workplace accidents involve vehicles at the place of work. In addition many more people are seriously injured. Common accidents involve:

- Being struck or run over
- Falling from vehicles
- Being struck or suffocated by a load
- Vehicles overturning
- Vehicles being driven by untrained drivers

In order to control transport risks, the vehicle, the driver and the working environment must be appropriately managed. The purpose of this article is to outline some guidance in relation to how this should happen.

## **Vehicles**

Under the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005 employers must ensure that vehicles are designed, provided and maintained in a safe condition. The Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (General Application) Regulations 2007 expands on the requirements of the Act by requiring the employer to take account of the specific work conditions, the characteristics, and the hazards in the place of work with regard to the health and safety of employees.

## **What should the employer do?**

- Carry out a written risk assessment of workplace transport hazards
- Ensure that when purchasing a vehicle assess them to ensure that they are safe and suitable for the purpose
- Ensure that vehicles are adequately maintained
- Ensure that drivers have adequate instruction, training and information to operate the vehicles and any attachments they use

## **Evaluating and Assessing the Vehicle**

The following should be taken into account when evaluating and assessing the vehicle:

- Ensure that there is appropriate seating that is safe and allows for driver comfort
- Safe means of access and egress to the cab and other accessed vehicle parts are essential, e.g. slip resistant steps and hand holds

- Ensure that dangerous parts such as exposed exhaust pipes, chain drives etc are adequately guarded
- Drivers should be able to see clearly all around their vehicles
- Ensure attachments are suitable for the task and compatible with the vehicle
- The vehicle should be stable under all foreseeable operating conditions
- Standard safety features such as horns, lights (including reversing lights) and seatbelts are provided. Consider having speed restrictors fitted
- Alarm systems that sound if the driver attempts to leave the vehicle without applying the handbrake should be considered
- The steering and braking systems should be suitable and effective
- Adequate driving protection should be provided against inclement weather, cold, noise, dust, fumes and vibration as necessary
- Ensure that the vehicle is capable of taking the full weight and size of everything that it may be required to carry and that adequate driver protection against shifting loads is provided
- Ensure that adequate anchor points are provided for securing loads

### **Vehicle Maintenance**

It is important both in order to prolong the life of the vehicle and ensure that the vehicle is safe to drive that the vehicle is regularly maintained. At a minimum this should involve basic safety checks and planned preventative maintenance. Planned preventative maintenance will prevent accidents and delays due to mechanical failure, minimise repair downtime and prevent excessive wear and breakdown.

Drivers should carry out basic safety checks prior to driving their vehicle. These would include checking tyres, windscreen wipers, washers, lights, indicators and warning devices. Drivers should have adequate instruction and training to perform such checks and providing a simple checklist could be of assistance. In addition the following should be undertaken:

- Vehicle attachments should be regularly inspected for damage and wear. Guards, safety devices and controls must be maintained
- Appropriate procedures should be in place to ensure that vehicles are kept clean in order to ensure good visibility for the driver and also to facilitate detection of any loose, worn or defective parts
- Regular preventative maintenance in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations should be planned and carried out at predetermined intervals. Such intervals will usually be based on time (hours of use) or distance (Kilometres)
- All repairs, modification, maintenance or servicing must be carried out by a competent person
- Maintenance and service records must be kept for all workplace vehicles. If some vehicle defects occur frequently, the root cause should be investigated

## **Driver**

Under the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005 the employer must take into account the employees capabilities when assigning an employee to a specific task. The employer is responsible for ensuring that when workplace transport drivers are appointed that they are not given work that they do not have the competence to undertake. People operating workplace transport vehicles must be trained and on the introduction of new attachments or technology the driver must receive training in respect of these.

### **Driver Selection**

When selecting people to drive workplace vehicles employers must:

- Select employees who have the correct safe attitude to workplace transport and have the ability to perform the job in a responsible, competent manner
- Consider the employee's physical fitness, such as health, eyesight, hearing and mental ability to carry out the job. Where possible, match the particular vehicle requirements, the task and situation with the driver's fitness and capabilities. Do not allow anyone who is unfit due to drugs or alcohol to drive a vehicle
- Carry out background checks; for instance, check the employee's driving licence background. Ensure that driver's licenses or certificates are appropriate for the vehicles they are driving
- If the driver has previous experience, assess them to ensure that they are competent

### **Driver Training**

The driver must be trained and competent to drive the vehicle being operated. The level of training required will depend on the driver's experience and the type of work to be carried out. New employees should be provided with induction training which should include information about traffic route layouts. On-the-job training should be provided on workplace policies such as speed limits and parking procedures. Employers must ensure that drivers are trained in safe driving practices, basic safety checks, proper use of safety features and how to report defects. Drivers should also receive training on how to secure loads.

The employer should reassess the drivers training at regular intervals and provide refresher training if necessary particularly if there has been a lapse in safe driving standards. All records should be updated as training is provided and should include details of the vehicles that the employee is competent to operate.

### **Driver Instruction and Information**

The driver should be supplied with a clear job description detailing their roles and responsibilities. The driver should be provided with a driver's handbook which details the safe systems of work and provides all company policies and rules relevant to driving. These policies should cover issues such as the use of mobile phones, in-vehicle technology, drugs and alcohol, fatigue, parking, smoking, seatbelt usage, driving hours and the carriage of passengers. Appropriate personal protective

equipment (PPE) should be provided such as high visibility jackets, safety boots or gloves and should be provided with instruction on how to use them.

### **Basic Driver Rules**

If you drive you should:

- Follow the designated vehicular traffic routes
- Always park safely
- Not drive when you are tired, ill or have poor vision. If you feel you are not competent or fit to drive a vehicle, don't drive it and inform your manager
- Ensure you understand the operating procedures of your vehicle
- Wear any PPE provided and keep PPE such as high-visibility jackets to hand so you do not have to get out of the vehicle to retrieve it
- Report any defects in vehicles
- Do not engage in horseplay or unsafe behaviour
- Keep vehicles as clean and tidy as possible

### **Safe Workplace**

A major cause of transport accidents is poor workplace design and layout. In carrying out a risk assessment an employer has the responsibility to ensure that all transport hazards are identified and assessed. The workplace itself must be evaluated with respect to the movement of vehicles and pedestrians and control measures put in place to eliminate or reduce the risks found.

Traffic routes should be suitably designed and maintained for the traffic to be carried. All traffic entering the workplace must be directed and controlled as far as practicable. The following should be evaluated during the risk assessment process:

#### **1. Vehicular Traffic Routes**

- Access and entry into the site should be reviewed. For example, does traffic have to cross a major road to enter or exit the site?
- Pedestrians and vehicles entering the site should be controlled by the use of barriers or access gates
- Ensure that drivers can see hazards
- The need for vehicles to reverse when collecting or delivering goods should, where possible, be avoided. One-way systems should be considered
- Traffic routes for heavy traffic should avoid the areas mainly used by pedestrians
- Sharp bends and blind corners should be eliminated as far as possible. Where they cannot be avoided warning signs and mirrors should be used to reduce the risks of accidents

- Passageways should be wide enough and the surfaces suitable for the safe movement of the largest vehicle likely to use them

## **2. Pedestrians**

- Pedestrians should be separated from vehicles and suitable pedestrian routes should be marked out
- Pedestrian crossing points with good visibility for both the driver and the pedestrian should be provided
- Provide barriers at entrances and exits to buildings to prevent pedestrians walking directly into traffic
- Pedestrians should wear high-visibility jackets or vests in areas where workplace vehicles operate
- Safe area should be provided for drivers while vehicles are being unloaded

## **3. Signage and Road Markings**

- All vehicular and pedestrian traffic routes should be signposted
- All road signage should comply with the Department of Transport Traffic Signs Manual
- All safety signage should comply with the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (General Application) Regulations 2007 (S.I. No. 299 of 2007) – Safety Signs at Places of Work – Part 7, Chapter 1
- All signage must be clearly understood
- Use reflective or illuminated signage where work is carried out outside of daylight hours
- Place appropriate signage at the workplace entrance to indicate the main site rules, e.g. traffic routes, speed limits etc
- Ensure that signage are not obstructed by objects or shrubbery

## **4. Lighting**

- Appropriate lighting should be provided on all traffic routes and yard areas
- The lighting should be positioned correctly
- The lighting should not cause a risk of glare to vehicle traffic

## **5. Traffic Control/Speed**

- An appropriate speed limit should be put in place and it should take account of the route layout, the vehicles using the route and the loads being carried
- Once in place the speed limit should be monitored and enforced
- Calming traffic measures such as rumble strips. Speed humps etc should be considered

## **6. Parking**

- An adequate number of safe, well lit and suitably designed parking spaces should be provided
- Onsite parking should enable separation between work and private vehicles
- Parking should be easy to find and ideally should be as close as possible to where people need to go once they leave their vehicles
- Employees and drivers should only park in their designated areas
- Parking areas should not obstruct key access routes

## **7. Housekeeping and Maintenance**

- All vehicular routes, lighting signage and route markings should be regularly cleaned and maintained
- Ensure that all surfaces have a good grip
- Ensure that pedestrian footpaths are kept clear of obstructions like shrubbery and materials that may cause slips, trips or falls such as mud or ice

## **8. Safe Systems of Work**

- Once the site has been assessed a traffic management plan should be prepared. Following the site assessment, prepare a traffic management plan
- As part of the plan a site map should be included which identifies the traffic routes for vehicles and pedestrians
- Review the site layout periodically to take account of changes in work activities, traffic volume, type and circulation