

Workplace Transport Safety Safe Vehicle

Information Sheet

To effectively control workplace transport risks, the vehicle, the driver and the working environment must be appropriately managed. This information sheet provides basic guidance on the management of vehicles and mobile work equipment in the workplace. The information is aimed primarily at vehicles and mobile work equipment in use in permanent fixed places of work, however, some of the information may also be applicable to vehicles in use in transient, temporary or mobile places of work. Information is provided on the selection, assessment, maintenance and use of vehicles including mobile work equipment. The target audience is employers and self-employed people. It will also be of interest to employees who drive vehicles in the workplace.

Introduction

Every year, a significant number of accidents are caused by workplace transport vehicles. It is perhaps because vehicles are widely used as part of daily life, that employers, managers and employees often fail to recognise that workplace vehicles can be dangerous and need to be managed safely. A portion of these accidents are due to the vehicle being unsuitable for the task it was carrying out, the vehicle was faulty or poorly maintained, the vehicle collapsed during maintenance work, the vehicle driver was untrained or human error occurred.

Legal Provisions

The main legislation applicable to vehicles in the general workplace is the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act, 2005 (No.10 of 2005) and the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (General Application) Regulations, 2007 (S.I. No. 299 of 2007). Note that under the Act, a vehicle is defined as a workplace. So where specific requirements are laid down for workplaces, these will also apply to vehicles, as far as reasonably practicable. The Act requires that the employer ensures that the vehicles are designed, provided and maintained in a safe condition and that there is safe access and egress.

The General Application Regulations expand on the requirements of the Act. They require that when selecting vehicles or mobile work equipment, the employer takes account of the specific work conditions, the characteristics and the hazards in the place of work with regard to the safety and health of employees. The employer must take account of any additional hazards posed by the use of the chosen vehicle. Requirements are laid down for mobile work equipment, self-propelled work equipment and fork-lift trucks and for their maintenance, inspection and testing.

Under the law it is an offence for anybody to intentionally or recklessly interfere with, misuse or damage anything provided under health and safety legislation, or provided to protect the safety, health and welfare of persons at work. This includes any safety features or devices provided on workplace vehicles, so it is an offence for instance for a person to intentionally disconnect a reversing siren on a forklift truck. Horseplay is also an offence under the Act.

Note the above is not an exhaustive list of legislation that is applicable to workplace transport vehicles. Other relevant legislation for example, the carriage of dangerous goods by road, construction and quarries legislation may also be applicable to your operation and may specify particular legal requirements for vehicles.

As an employer/person in control of a place of work what must I do?

- ▲ Carry out a written risk assessment of workplace transport hazards. In conducting the workplace transport risk assessment, the vehicles and mobile work equipment in use in the workplace must be evaluated and assessed.
- ▲ If purchasing a vehicle or mobile work equipment, assess them to ensure that they are safe and suitable for their purpose and do not create an additional hazard when introduced into the workplace.
- ▲ Ensure that the vehicles and mobile work equipment are adequately maintained throughout their working life and that maintenance records are kept. Retain the manufacturer's instruction handbook for the life time of the vehicle or mobile work equipment. Ensure that the handbook is readily accessible to the drivers, operators and maintenance staff. If selling on the vehicle or mobile work equipment, ensure that the handbook is passed on to the new owner.
- ▲ Carefully select, train and authorise drivers. Keep written records of training provided and authorisations granted. Ensure that drivers have adequate instruction, training and information to operate the vehicles and any attachments that they use. Provide guidance on good posture and where appropriate information on how to adjust the seat correctly.
- ▲ If contracting or leasing vehicles or mobile work equipment, specify safety standards for them such as maintenance and safety feature requirements. Consider including these as requirements in any contracts.

What should be considered when purchasing or assessing workplace transport?

Prior to purchasing/assessing any workplace transport for your work activities, it is essential to analyse what requirements will be necessary to ensure that the vehicle or mobile work equipment can carry out the work and is suitable for the workplace and the driver. The easiest way of doing this is to prepare a specification for your workplace transport. The vehicle and mobile work equipment must be the correct type and size for the work activities and the workplace. Consult with employees, especially vehicle drivers and operators prior to the selection, purchase or assessment of any workplace transport.

In general, the overall standard of vehicles used in the workplace should be at least as good as for the public roads. If such a standard cannot be met, consider whether the vehicle needs to be replaced with a new, safer model. When purchasing a vehicle ensure that they are equipped with the best safety features possible.

When evaluating and assessing the vehicle take account of the following issues:

- ▲ Ergonomic requirements: ensure that there is appropriate seating that is safe and allows for driver comfort.
- ▲ Access and egress: safe means of access and egress to the cab and other accessed vehicle parts are essential. Request well designed access such as slip resistant steps and hand holds, when purchasing vehicles.

- ▲Guarding: ensure that dangerous parts such as exposed exhaust pipes, chain drives, power take off (PTO) shafts are adequately guarded.
- ▲Driver's field of vision: driver's should be able to see clearly all around their vehicle, if visibility is limited, specify extra visibility aids if not standard vehicle issue. Mirrors, CCTV or visibility aids such as radar, ultrasonic or colour recognition systems may be of assistance to the driver.
- ▲Driver protection: provide Falling Object Protection Systems (FOPS) and Roll Over Protection Systems (ROPs) where required. In certain situations, the vehicle cab may not be sufficient to protect the driver and may require special reinforcement.
- ▲Vehicular attachments: ensure attachments are suitable for the task and compatible with the vehicle.
- ▲Vehicle stability: the vehicle should be stable under all foreseeable operating conditions.
- ▲Safety Features: Ensure that appropriate standard safety features such as horns, lights (including reversing lights) and seatbelts are provided as required. Consider requesting high visibility seatbelts which will assist in monitoring their use. Consider having speed restrictors fitted.

Alarm systems that sound if the driver attempts to leave the vehicle without applying the handbrake should also be considered. Ensure that the steering and braking systems are suitable and effective. Ensure that the vehicle controls are adequate so that the vehicle can be turned off quickly and safely and that it cannot be started accidentally.

- ▲Environmental protection: Ensure that adequate driver protection is provided against inclement weather, cold, noise, dust, fumes and vibration as necessary.
- ▲The workplace: some vehicles may not be suitable for certain work situations for instance; gas or petrol powered forklift trucks are unsuitable for use in confined areas or potentially flammable atmospheres.
- ▲Vehicle colour and markings: consider bright conspicuous colours and markings that will ensure that the vehicle stands out and can be seen in poor visibility conditions or at a distance.
- ▲Loads: 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 possible shifting loads is provided. Ensure that adequate anchor points are provided for securing loads properly.

Failure to take account of the above issues at the purchasing stage may prove very costly if adjustments and retrofitting have to be made at a later date. Prior to retrofitting any vehicle, consult the manufacturer and ensure that any work is carried out by a competent person. If retrofitting a vehicle ensure that the structural integrity of the vehicle is not affected and that the actual retrofitting operation is safe, for instance, if carrying out welding on a vehicle ensure that there is no risk of explosion.

Vehicle Maintenance

In order to prolong the life of the vehicle and ensure that the vehicle is safe to drive, regular vehicle maintenance is required. The extent of maintenance will vary with each vehicle but at a minimum 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 and operators are usually the first people to notice when a vehicle defect develops. Drivers should carry out basic safety checks prior to driving their vehicle. Basic safety checks would normally include checking tyres, windscreen wipers, washers, lights, indicators and warning devices. A simple checklist may be of assistance in conducting the checks. Ensure that drivers have adequate instruction, information and training to perform such checks.
- ▲ 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. Vision should not be obstructed by inappropriately placed pendants or stickers on windows.
- ▲ Thorough examinations by a competent person may be legally required for certain types of vehicles and work equipment. For example, under the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (General Application) Regulations, 2007, tailboard goods lift and forklift trucks (if not used to lift persons) must be thoroughly examined every 12 months.
- ▲ 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.

Safe Systems of Work

- ▲ Appropriate safe systems of work must be put in place to ensure that adequate precautions are in place when carrying out vehicle maintenance. The systems of work must ensure that the maintenance operator and method of work is safe and that the vehicle cannot run away or that the vehicle or any raised parts cannot collapse.
- ▲ Ensure safe systems of work are in place for vehicle operations including parking, refuelling and battery charging. If vehicles are parked up or left unattended ensure that keys are not left in the vehicles. Put in place a key control system to ensure that access to keys is restricted and controlled to authorised users only.

- ▲ Put in place a vehicle defect reporting system. Ensure that appropriate procedures are in place to ensure that all defects reported are actioned and repaired as appropriate.
- ▲ Instigate an accident and incident reporting system, including a standard report form, to ensure that any accidents or incidents involving vehicles are reported.

Further Information

Further information on workplace transport safety and occupational safety and health in the workplace is available on our website at www.hsa.ie or by contacting the Workplace Contact Unit at **1890 289 389**.