

RCV Inspection Campaign 2024

Findings



In July 2024, the Authority conducted a focused inspection campaign on Refuse Collection Vehicles (RCVs). Twenty-five different RCV operators were inspected. The inspection campaign targeted the provision and wearing of high visibility clothing, driver blind spots and compliance of man-riding footboards with the Irish Standard I.S. EN1501-1:2021.

This information sheet summarises the findings from the inspection campaign and reminds employers of areas that require attention.

Context for Campaign

In the past six years, there have been five fatalities involving RCVs. These fatalities have included both employees and members of the public. Two of the fatalities involved an operator using a man-riding footboard to the rear of the RCV.

In addition, the Authority has in the past 10 years received

81 accident/incident notifications which involved RCVs.



Inspection and Maintenance

Under Road Traffic Law, there is a legal duty on operators to make sure that vehicles are road-worthy. Maintenance of the RCV should be carried out regularly, in line with the manufacturers' recommendations. In addition routine schedule cleaning, lubrication and daily vehicle pre-use checks should be completed.

Daily vehicle pre-use checks should ensure that all visibility aids, such as mirrors and camera systems are in good condition and properly adjusted. Where man-riding footboards are in use, they should also be included in the pre-use checks. Drivers must be trained on how to complete the pre-use checks and report defects for repair.

High Visibility Clothing

High visibility clothing is a necessary requirement for those working near, on and around moving vehicles. Given that RCV helpers work close to moving vehicles, it is best practice to wear the highest class, Class 3, of high visibility clothing. This increases the likelihood of being seen by the RCV driver and other road users, particularly during kerbside collections and other vehicle loading and unloading activities.

During the RCV campaign, high visibility clothing was provided and worn by helpers. However, there is an opportunity to increase the use of Class 3 high visibility clothing.

High visibility clothing does not guarantee that the wearer will be visible to a driver, under all conditions. The person wearing the high visibility clothing should be aware of environmental conditions, including the weather and importantly, driver blind spots.

It is essential that workers have the necessary facilities to wash, where appropriate, and dry the PPE provided to them. Proper maintenance of high visibility clothing is critical as dirt and wear can diminish visibility and effectiveness.



Further information on Class 3 high visibility clothing is available in the [High Visibility Clothing for use around moving vehicles Information Sheet](#)



Driver Blind Spots

If RCV helpers or members of the public are in the driver's blind spot, they are at high risk of vehicle impact. Understanding blind spots and implementing safe systems of work is key to reducing the risk of collision, especially with helpers and members of the public.

To manoeuvre an RCV safely, the driver needs to be able to see all around the vehicle. Blind spots can be reduced by fitting appropriate aids such as, automatic emergency braking (AEB), proximity sensors, extra mirrors (e.g. cyclops mirrors) and camera systems. The primary function of camera systems is to protect the helpers during collection operations. Such systems are not designed as reversing cameras and should therefore be seen as supplementary and not a primary reversing aid. Drivers should be aware of blind spots in which members of the public and helpers can disappear from view.

During the campaign, it was observed that in many cases the camera systems, mirrors and proximity alarms were in good condition, but there remains significant opportunity to retrofit extra aids to assist drivers particularly with reversing manoeuvres. Regular cleaning of the cameras must be carried out to ensure clear visibility.

The risks associated with reversing an RCV can be reduced by the following:

- Where possible, reversing manoeuvres should be eliminated;
- A safe system of work must be developed and implemented;
- Use reversing aids such as extra mirrors, camera systems, proximity sensors, and AEB;
- Where the risk cannot be adequately controlled by the above measures, then the RCV helpers should be trained as spotters to assist the RCV driver in reversing the vehicle;
- Spotters must be provided with clear instructions on where to stand when giving direction to the driver to make sure the driver can see them. Similarly, spotters must be able to see the driver in the mirror at all times.
- Employees should be audited randomly to ensure that a safe system of work is being implemented.

A photograph of a white and orange Terberg refuse collector vehicle. The vehicle's footboard is extended downwards, showing its internal structure and various safety components like a control panel with buttons and a red emergency stop button. The Terberg logo is visible on the side of the vehicle. The background is dark and out of focus.

Man-riding Footboards

Man-riding footboards must conform to the Irish Standard I.S. EN1501-1:2021. If the footboard does not conform with the said standard, then the footboard must not be used given the high risk of a helper sustaining serious or fatal injuries.

Overall, the campaign found that footboards were in a poor condition. The issues identified included defective safety devices, damaged/unstable footboards, inadequate grip handles, and general non-conformance with the Irish Standard I.S. EN1501-1:2021. It was evident during the campaign that there is a lack of inspection and maintenance of footboards and the associated safety features, so far as is reasonably practicable, to ensure the safety health and welfare of employees.

The combination of the findings of this campaign and the fatalities over the past 6 years involving RCVs, has culminated in the Authority advising employers against the use of man-riding footboards on RCVs.

Key reminders to employers from the campaign



The Authority advises against the use of man-riding footboards due to the high risk of serious or fatal injury.



Bin lifting systems designed to lift bins with a volume greater than 360 litres must undergo a thorough examination as per Regulation 52 of the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (General Application) Regulations, 2007.



Make sure that daily vehicle pre-checks are being completed. Any defects should be recorded and reported for repair.



Employers should randomly audit work activities to ensure that RCV drivers and helpers are following a safe system of work.



Be aware of driver blind spots.



Make sure drivers and helpers wear Class 3 high visibility clothing.





If you wish to make a complaint or have a query about workplace health and safety, you can contact us by phoning 0818 289 389 (Monday to Friday, 9:00 am to 3:00 pm) or emailing contactus@hsa.ie

Further information

- www.hsa.ie/education
- www.hsa.ie/eng/topics/vulnerable_workers/vulnerable_workers.html
- www.hsalearning.ie
 - Health and Safety in the Workplace for Apprentices.
 - 'Workplace Safety, Health and Welfare Induction.'
- www.besmart.ie is a free online risk assessment and safety statement tool.



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Health and Safety Authority