

RISKS OF TRANSPORT IN THE WORKPLACE

The combination of transport and pedestrians presents a high risk in any work environment. Therefore, it is essential that risk assessments are carried out and safe working procedures are devised and complied with.

It is important that you have clear written procedures for the interface between vehicles and pedestrians and that these are known to all who work in, or enter into, the workplace, and that the procedures are continuously monitored. As part of this it is important that there is good signage, marked-out walkways, prohibited areas, good lighting, use of high-vis clothing, plus clear transport movement procedures; for example the use of a banksman during vehicle manoeuvres.

This is not only essential for the safe working environment, but in the event of an incident you can show that you had taken all reasonable measures to avoid such incident.

Unfortunately it is not always obvious what needs to be done, 'when it has always been done this way' and this is the advantage of bringing in an independent assessor, who can take an unbiased and fresh approach to the issues.

Following a number of serious incidents resulting in fatalities, transport has become a focus industry for the HSE.

In the first case, a major builder's merchant was fined £2m after an accident on one of their sites resulted in the death of a customer. The customer was loading planks of wood onto the roof of his car. A fixing strap broke and he fell over, just at the time a delivery lorry was operating in the yard; he was crushed and died of his injuries. In sentencing the company the Judge took the view that this "was an accident waiting to happen". He held that the company had failed to ensure loading and unloading activities were undertaken in a safe manner and in a safe area."

In the second case, a waste management company was fined £300,000 plus costs, after a worker who was refuelling his vehicle was crushed when a lorry reversed into him. The investigation found that there were no marked or identified vehicle or pedestrian routes, there were no rules on reversing manoeuvres and lighting at the site was below the standard required.

In the third case, an experienced HGV driver failed to follow safety procedures when connecting his tractor unit to a parked trailer. An investigation found that he failed to apply the brake of the tractor unit before he left it, and also failed to follow safe coupling procedures. His carelessness resulted in the death of two workers who were hit when the vehicle rolled backwards.

These are just three most recent cases. It highlights the importance of safe working practices, risk assessments, documented procedures and the on-going training of staff. It is all too easy to get into bad habits, because nothing has happened in the past. Do give us a call for a no obligation meeting on how we can assist you by conducting an audit.

At H-ELP Systems we are qualified in Health & Safety and have extensive experience in the transport industry. Do call us for any advice or for an H&S audit of your workplace risks.