

20Safe Driving: Loading and Unloading and Working at Height

Loading and unloading can be dangerous. Machinery can seriously hurt people. Heavy loads, moving or overturning vehicles and working at height can all lead to serious injuries or death.

Every year over 700 people are injured falling from vehicles. Falls are currently the second highest cause of fatalities and injuries in the Transport Industry. The purpose of this document is to detail the Company's Policy and Procedures regarding the safety of Loading and Unloading and Working at Heights, including practical help and advice to employees.

Falls can be caused by:

- Slipping and falling from loads, access step, ladders, broken ropes or overbalancing,
- Inappropriate footwear,
- A lack of awareness and training,
- Bad weather.

Even falling a short distance can be very serious or even fatal.

The Company tries to highlight areas where it is felt that simple risk reduction methods can have the most benefit and to comply with the Work at Height Regulations 2005. These regulations came in to force on 6th April 2005 and apply to all work at height where there is a risk of a fall liable to cause personal injury.

1. Preventing Falls from Vehicles

Cab Access/Egress in LGV, CARS & Mini-buses

Vehicle cab heights continue to increase, and it is vital that drivers follow good practice to minimize the possibility of a fall from height:

- Use the steps provided,
- Use grab handles to assist you, not the steering wheel,
- Visually check the ground for obstructions before egress,
- Do not jump out of the cab,
- Use the steps and grab handles provided and exit the cab backwards.

2. Planning and Risk Assessment of the Area

Staff must:

- Look for hazards,
- Decide who might be harmed if an incident occurs,
- Ensure that no work is done at height if it is safe and reasonably practicable to do it other than at height,
- Ensure access and egress are clear of risks,
- Ensure that work is properly planned, appropriately supervised (if necessary) and carried out in as safe a way as is reasonably practicable,
- Plan for emergencies and rescue.

Weather

Staff must ensure that work is postponed if weather conditions endanger health and/or safety.

3. Staff Training

The Company will train employees involved in working at height on how to avoid falling and how to avoid or minimize injury to themselves if they should fall.

4. Vehicle Loading

LGVs & Minibuses must be loaded so that their maximum weights – including axles which are stamped on the vehicle's identification plate by the manufacturer – are not exceeded.

LGV & Minibuses loads must be safely secured using the appropriate strapping; the weight of the load **is not** enough to keep it safely secured.

If your LGV is overloaded, you could face a fixed penalty fine or a court appearance.

The following guidelines must be followed to help avoid problems and minimise the risk of accidents.

Guidance for Vehicle Loading:

Loading and unloading areas should be:

- Properly assessed for the risk of falls; always check the floor or deck of the loading area before loading to make sure it is safe. Look out for debris, broken boarding etc.
- Clear of other traffic, pedestrians and people not involved in loading or unloading,
- Clear of overhead electric cables so there is no chance of touching them, or of electricity jumping to 'earth' through machinery, loads or people.
- Level: to maintain stability; trailers should be parked on firm level ground,
- Any equipment must be properly inspected and maintained.

During the loading/unloading process:

- Appropriate work equipment should be selected and used,
- Safety equipment must be considered; mechanical equipment and heavy moving loads are dangerous,
- Guards or skirting plates may be necessary if there is a risk of anything being caught in machinery (for example, dock levellers or vehicle tail lifts). There may be other mechanical dangers and safety procedures to be considered.
- Ensure the vehicle or trailer has its brakes applied and all stabilisers are used; the vehicle should be as stable as possible.
- Loads must be suitably packaged. When pallets are used, the driver needs to check that:
 - They are in good condition
 - Loads are properly secured to them

- Loads are safe on the vehicle. They may need to be securely attached to make sure they cannot fall off.
- Loads should be spread as evenly as possible, during both loading and unloading. Uneven loads can make the vehicle or trailer unstable.
- Loads should be secured or arranged so that they do not slide around. Racking may help stability.
- Vehicles must never be overloaded; overloaded vehicles can become unstable, difficult to steer or be less able to brake.
- Loading should allow for safe unloading,
- Tailgates and sideboards must be closed when possible. If over-hang cannot be avoided, it must be kept to a minimum. The over-hanging part of the load must be clearly marked.
- In some work places, it may be possible to install a harness system to protect people working at height.
- Provide a safe place where drivers can wait if they are not involved. Drivers should not remain in their cabs if this can be avoided. No one should be in the loading/unloading area if they are not needed.
- There must be safeguards against drivers accidentally driving away too early. This does happen and is extremely dangerous. Measures could include any of the following:
 - Traffic lights,
 - The use of vehicle or trailer restraints,
 - The person in charge of loading or unloading could keep hold of the vehicle keys or paperwork until it is safe for the vehicle to be moved.

These safeguards would be especially effective where there could be communication problems, for example where foreign drivers are involved.

Additional considerations affecting the safety of loading/unloading:

- If more than one company is involved, they should agree in advance how loading and unloading will happen, for example... If visiting drivers unload their vehicles themselves, they must receive the necessary instructions, equipment and cooperation for safe unloading. Arrangements will need to be agreed in advance between the haulier and the recipient.
- Some goods are difficult to secure during transport; hauliers and recipients will need to exchange information about loads in advance so that they can agree safe unloading procedures. Checks must be made before unloading to make sure loads have not shifted during transit and are not likely to move or fall when restraints are removed.

Equipment, Temporary Structures and Safety Features

When selecting equipment for work at height, you must:

- Use the most suitable equipment, give collective protection measures (e.g. guard rails) priority over personal protective measures (e.g. safety harnesses).
- Take account of working conditions and risks to the safety of all those at the place where the work equipment is to be used.

Fragile Surfaces

You must ensure that no one working under your control goes on to or near a fragile surface where it is reasonably practicable for the worker to carry out the work safely without having to do so, having regard to the demands of the task, equipment or working environment.

If anyone does work on or near a fragile surface, you must:

- Ensure, as far as reasonably practicable, that suitable platforms, coverings and guard rails are provided and used to minimize the risk.
- Do all that is reasonably practicable, if any risk of a fall remains, to minimize the distance and effect of a fall.

Falling Objects

To prevent injury, you must do all that is reasonably practicable to prevent anything falling. If you cannot prevent things falling, you must ensure that the risk of anyone being injured by is reduced to as low as is reasonably practicable.

You must ensure that nothing is:

- Thrown or tipped from height if it is likely to injure anyone,
- Stored/secured in such a way that its movement is likely to injure anyone.

Danger Areas

Where there is a risk that a person could fall a distance or be struck by a falling object that is liable to cause personal injury, unauthorised persons should not be permitted to enter the area so far as is reasonably practicable.

If you are working under someone else's control, you must:

- Report any safety hazards to them,
- Use the equipment supplied properly, including safety devices, following any training and instructions (unless you think that would be unsafe in which case you should seek further instructions before continuing).

Liam Clear
Managing Director
Wembley Innovation Ltd

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