



Safety alert 12/2012

Compacting waste trucks

The purpose of this Alert is to provide information to all employers and workers involved in the operation of compacting waste trucks during waste collection.

Background

In the last two years in the solid waste collection industry there have been 13 serious injuries of 60+ days and 35 injuries of five+ days.

An area of potential risk of injury in the industry is the operation of compacting waste trucks. There have been two recent fatalities whereby an employee was crushed between his waste truck and a wall and a member of the public was run over by a waste truck while it was reversing. In another incident, a worker received serious injuries after being crushed between the compactor and the tailgate.

Contributing factors

The operation of compacting waste trucks has the potential to expose collection crews, other road users and pedestrians to a range of hazards which may include:-

- Being struck by compaction truck or other vehicles.
- Being struck by tailgate.
- Crushing by tailgate or crushing in compactor.
- Falls from height.
- Manual tasks.
- Slips trips and falls.
- Sharps and biological waste.
- Fatigue.
- Environmental hazards including extremes of temperature, UV exposure.
- Work near overhead power.
- Noise.

Action required

1. Under regulation 3.1 of the Occupational Safety and Health Regulations employers have a legal requirement to carry out a risk assessment of their specific activities. This will help:
 - identify the hazards and those potentially at risk (employees, contractors and subcontractors, agency workers, members of the public etc.);
 - assess the risks from those hazards; and
 - consider the means by which the risks can be reduced.

2. Employers should make themselves aware of any available compacting waste truck safety features which may eliminate hazards or reduce their risk such as:-
 - Reversing cameras, audible alarms, lights and mirrors.
 - Use of tailgate props (always stay clear of unpropped tailgate).
 - Manufacturer's recommended closing times for tailgates.
 - Emergency stops.
 - Audible alarms which sound when the driver's door is opened and the vehicle handbrake is not fully engaged.
 - Communication systems between driver and assistants.
 - Speed limiting devices.
 - Safety signage.
3. Reversing causes a disproportionately large number of moving vehicle accidents in the waste/recycling industry, therefore wherever possible reversing should be eliminated or the reversing distance reduced.

Where reversing cannot be eliminated, a risk assessment may indicate that use of reversing aids alone is insufficient to adequately control the risks during reversing. In these circumstances;

- Trained reversing assistants should be used.
- The reversing assistant should stand 5-10 m back and 1 m out from the side of the vehicle, on the pavement wherever possible, so that the driver can see them at all times.
- Where direct eye-contact is not practicable at all times, there should be other means of communication between the driver and the reversing assistant, such as two way radio or mobile phone contact.
- Reversing assistants should never stand directly behind the vehicle. If the driver loses sight of the reversing assistant they should stop the vehicle at once.
- People should not be in the crush zone during reversing, ie between the rear/sides of the vehicle and fixed objects such as walls, lamp posts or cars.
- Reversing assistants should never walk backwards while giving signals (this poses a slip/trip risk) and should be sure the driver can see them at all times.
- Loading should never take place while the vehicle is reversing.

Further information

Further information relevant to the solid waste collection industry can be obtained from WorkSafe's website www.worksafe.wa.gov.au or by contacting customer service on 1300 307 877 or emailing safety@commerce.wa.gov.au

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