

Delivering Safely on the Farm

Do vehicles visit your farm to deliver or collect goods? If so, are you aware of your responsibilities and the duty of care you owe to visiting drivers? Whilst deliveries and collections are essential to your business, they can be some of the most dangerous activities you have to deal with.

Every year, approximately 70 people are killed and 2000 seriously injured in accidents involving vehicles in and around workplaces. A significant number of these occur during deliveries and collections. Unless effective precautions are taken, you or family members, your employees and visiting drivers are at risk from:

- being hit by moving vehicles
- electrocution from overhead power lines
- being hit by objects falling from vehicles
- slips, trips and falls
- contact with machinery and equipment

Many delivery and collection accidents could be prevented if there was better co-operation between all those concerned.

When it comes to deliveries and collections on the farm, there are three key duty holders:

- the supplier sending the goods
- the carrier - the haulier or other company carrying the goods
- the recipient - the person receiving the goods

A common factor in delivery accidents is the lack of liaison between supplier, carrier and recipient about "who is responsible for what" in terms of safety. In most work situations the safety of an employee is primarily the responsibility of his or her employer, but in order to deliver or collect goods employees have to visit premises controlled by others (i.e. the farm). The safety of everyone at the farm, including visiting drivers, is in the hands of the farmer, as they should control what takes place on site.

Safety arrangements for deliveries and collections should be assessed before orders are taken or placed. Planning safety precautions reduces the risk of accidents and can also save time and money. For instance, it should prevent deliveries being delayed or sent back because a site can't handle the load or the vehicle carrying it.

The delivery vehicle driver plays a key part in delivery safety, and is often the person injured in delivery or collection accidents - the driver should receive adequate safety information for each delivery or collection beforehand.

All parties involved in deliveries and collections need to exchange and agree information to ensure goods can be delivered and collected safely. In particular consider

- any restrictions on the type or size of vehicle the site can safely handle.
- any restrictions on when goods should be delivered or collected.
- best approach routes to the farm.
- where visiting vehicles should park on arrival, where and whom to report to.
- any procedures the visiting driver needs to follow e.g. bio-security arrangements
- the method of (un)loading - what equipment is available.
- where the driver should be during the (un)loading of his vehicle.
- are drivers able to understand English or does the plan need to be available in translation.

To reduce the risks associated with delivery and collections, there are several controls that the farm must ensure are in place. These include:

- Access and egress – can delivery vehicles safely enter and leave the site? Can
- Overhead power lines (OHPLS) – are tipping, loading and unloading areas a safe distance from any OHPLS? If not, suitable control measures such as barriers and signage must be used.
- Lighting – is the lighting in the loading / unloading area suitable? If not, consider re-scheduling delivery or collection times.
- Ladders, steps, floors (particularly lofts and catwalks) – are all areas and equipment safe, stable and secure. Visitors must not be allowed to place themselves in any situation where their health and safety may be at risk.
- Pipes and fittings – are pipes and fittings regularly inspected and maintained. All parties should monitor conditions and communicate any changes as they occur.
- Bulk bins (e.g. static shock from unearthed bins) and mechanical handling facilities – do metallic bulk bins and associated metallic structures have effective electrical bonding and earthing?
- Hazardous substances – are arrangements in place to ensure visiting drivers are not exposed to hazardous substances such as dust, fumes, chemicals, infectious organisms, etc?
- Children – are children suitably segregated from potentially dangerous activities, including moving and working vehicles and equipment?
- Vehicle movements – are pedestrians segregated from vehicle movement areas, (especially children)? Are surfaces suitable for the vehicles used? Are arrangements in place to minimise reversing or are other suitable controls in place e.g. reversing aids, such as mounted mirrors, banksman or reversing alarms.
- Obstacles in the working areas (e.g. machinery operations) - are all working areas clear and unobstructed? Are visitors and other farming operations kept separate?
- Animals (including pets) - are all animals kept under control at all times.
- Machinery – is all machinery and equipment properly guarded and regularly inspected and maintained? Are the people who are expected to use machinery appropriately trained?
- Slips, trips and falls – are surface around delivery areas clean and even with adequate drainage and lighting? Are spills, ice, snow or any other obstacles cleared?
- the (un)loading area should be in a designated, adequately lit area from which people and vehicles not essential for (un)loading are excluded.
- vest, prohibitions on reversing or conditions for reversing such as the use of a banksman.

A lorry driver was hit by a grain bucket attached to a telescopic loader when he was delivering feed to a farm. He was walking through a passageway towards the farmer when a teleloader driven by a farm employee struck him from behind bruising his neck, back and shoulders. The bucket on the loader had been raised obstructing the driver's forward view.

The farmer was prosecuted under Section 3(1) of the Health & Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 for failing to ensure the safety of delivery drivers. He pleaded guilty and was fined £2,700 plus £800 towards the costs of bringing the prosecution. The driver's employer was also prosecuted for failing to ensure the safety of delivery drivers during farm deliveries and, on pleading guilty, was given a conditional discharge and ordered to pay £1,551 towards the cost of the case.

A 44 year old lorry driver had to have both legs amputated following an accident at a farm he visited to collect a load of field beans. An employee at the farm had loaded some beans into the bucket of a telescopic handler to transport them to the waiting lorry. The bucket was overloaded and as it was raised the telehandler fell forward, trapping the lorry driver underneath the bucket. He was rescued and taken to hospital by air ambulance, but had to have both legs amputated - one above the knee and the other below.

The investigation found that: the telehandler's Safe Working Load Indicator (SWLI) which would have warned the driver that it was trying to move too heavy a load was defective; the load chart in the cab was worn and extension markers on the boom of the telehandler were missing; the farm employee had not been trained in the safe use of the telehandler and had not seen or been shown the user manual or any written instructions.

The farm owner was prosecuted under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 for failing to ensure the health and safety of both the lorry driver any his own employees, and the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1992 for the lack of adequate training. He was fined a total of £20,000 plus costs of £1891.