

HSE warns HGV operators about safety during reversing following successful prosecution

Haulage company fined £4,000 following accident resulting in serious injury

The prosecution followed an investigation into an accident to an employee, who was seriously injured after being trapped and crushed between two heavy goods vehicles as one reversed past the other.

The investigation by the HSE showed a number of deficiencies in the company's arrangements to ensure safety during reversing operations. These deficiencies were identified as putting employees at serious risk of injury from being struck by a reversing vehicle.

As a result of the prosecution, W. XXXXXXXXXX I was fined £4,000 at Durham Magistrates Court after admitting it had breached section 2(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974. The company was also ordered to pay £2,500 in costs.

HM Inspector of Health and Safety Richard Bishop told the court that his investigation found that the company had been alerted to the risks less than a year before the accident, when it commissioned the Road Haulage Association (RHA) to carry out risk assessments at its premises. However, the precautions identified by the risk assessments were not implemented, meaning that the company had almost no physical or organisational measures in place to control workplace transport risks.

Speaking after the case, Mr Bishop said: "Vehicles are a part of everyday life, and as a result their dangers are often overlooked – complacency can be a real problem. But workplace transport continues to be the second biggest cause of fatal accidents at work.

In 2004/05 there were 70 deaths and over 2,000 major injuries involving vehicles at work. Reversing alone caused about a quarter of the fatal accidents.

Notes to editors:

1. *Legislation:* Section 2(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 places a duty on employers to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare at work of their employees. Breach of section 2(1) is an offence, which is punishable by a fine of up to £20,000 in Magistrates Courts, or an unlimited fine if a company is convicted in a Crown Court.
2. *Workplace transport:* Workplace transport is the second largest cause of fatal accidents to workers in the UK, and a reduction in this kind of accident is a priority for HSE. The main causes of accidents are being struck by a moving vehicle, falling off a vehicle (or its load), loads falling off vehicles, and vehicles overturning.