

Collecting & Delivering Goods Safely



shoosmiths

Every year in the UK about 70 people are killed and 2,000 seriously injured in accidents involving vehicles in and around work places – a significant number of those are during the everyday essential business activity of collecting and delivering goods.

The most common factor in these accidents is a lack of any agreement between the supplier, carrier and recipient about “who is responsible for what” in safety terms.

The duty to ensure the health, safety and welfare of employees involved in the delivery or collection of goods falls on three main duty holders. These are:

- The supplier sending the goods
- The carrier – haulier or other company carrying the goods
- The recipient – the person collecting or receiving the goods.

In most work situations the safety of an employee is primarily the responsibility of his or her employer, but when delivering or collecting goods employees have to visit premises controlled by others. The safety of everyone at premises, including people visiting a site, are in the hands of the person in charge of the site and as such they have a duty to control what takes place on the site.

The perceived overlap of responsibilities can lead to misunderstandings unless all duty holders exchange information about the main risks involved and agree who does what to control them.

Each duty holder must assess the delivery and collection risks and reduce them as far as is reasonable practicable to comply with the law.

Safety arrangements should be assessed before orders are taken and placed. Incorporating safety arrangements in all the order - placing and order-taking documentation, so that the parties involved have to check the safety arrangements are adequate before authorising the particular delivery or collection, might be a sensible way of ensuring that safe arrangements for delivering and collection have been made.

Clearly the driver plays a key part and statistically is often the person injured as a result of these accidents. The driver therefore needs to receive adequate safety information for each collection and delivery before it takes place.

Depending on the nature of the arrangements, where deliveries or collections regularly take place with a particular supplier or carrier, all parties should be able to agree a written delivery plan. When recipients, suppliers or carriers deal with each other on a one-off basis it will usually still be reasonably practicable to exchange basic delivery safety information, and agree on the main precautions at the time that an order is placed.

The law requires that all duty holders in the chain take reasonable steps to co-operate with one another to achieve safety. Should an accident occur, all may be asked to show to the regulatory authorities that they took those steps.

The general principle should be that all parties send out safety information on deliveries and collections to the other parties in the delivery chain. If necessary, request safety information from other parties in the delivery chain. The aim is that a safe delivery plan be agreed. The main purpose of such exchanges should be to make expectations clear, to ensure those expectations can be met, and if they cannot be met to agree what to do. The Health & Safety Executive advises that if agreement cannot be reached on how significant safety issues are dealt with then the delivery or collection should not take place.

Some of the issues to be considered when agreeing a safe delivery plan are:

- Restrictions on the type or size of vehicles a site can safely handle.
- A site plan showing parking, location of reception, routes to be taken through the site and location of loading area.
- Site rules for where visiting vehicles should park on arrival and where and to whom they report



- Any site requirements for trailer parking and the prevention of “drive-off” accidents.
- Any procedures that drivers need to follow, such as wearing high visibility vests, the limits on use of mobile ‘phones or prohibitions on reversing or the use of banksmen.
- Who is in overall charge of the loading or unloading of visiting vehicles?
- What visiting drivers or site staff should do if they are not satisfied with safety arrangements, including to whom they should report their concerns.
- What to do if a load appears to have shifted dangerously in transit.
- The point at which the visiting driver would give permission for his vehicle to be unloaded and how this handover will be clearly understood by all.
- Is there a designated safe area for visiting drivers with safe access? What is the expectation of the driver by the site owner? Are they to stay in their cab or is there a designated area for them where they can observe loading or unloading?
- If access onto the vehicle is to be undertaken by the driver, how will the risk of falls be prevented or reduced?
- Who will be responsible for sheeting and unsheeting loads? Is a sheeting gantry provided?
- To whom are accidents or incidents, near misses and other safety concerns during deliveries and collections to be reported.

Employers have duties under the Health & Safety at Work Act and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations to ensure the safety of their employees and others visiting their site. Employers need to carry out specific risk assessments of the hazards involved in collection and delivery and ensure that any control methods are implemented and supervised. Remember that any lifting operations needs to be properly planned by a competent person, appropriately supervised and carried out in a safe manner.

Any lifting equipment needs to be properly maintained and periodically examined and marked with a safe working load. Anyone using a fork lift truck in connection with the delivery or collection of goods needs to have been suitably trained and to drive those fork lift trucks in accordance with the approved code of practice issued by the Health & Safety Executive.

Drivers need to be trained in general safety precautions to take when visiting sites, in particular concerning the risks involved in unloading delivery vehicles, and they should be given clear instructions on what to do if they are not satisfied with the arrangements for ensuring safety at a particular site. Drivers should be authorised to refuse or halt the loading or unloading of their vehicle on safety grounds. In addition to training, providing drivers with simple safety check lists may help them check that reasonable precautions have been taken. Any agency drivers used must be familiar with the arrangements for collecting or delivering safely.

This area of health and safety practice is receiving increased attention from the health and safety authorities, as part of their concentration on workplace transport, which they have identified as a priority topic for enforcement activity.

Current arrangements for preventing vehicle accidents during delivery and collection should therefore be reviewed, preferably in consultation with safety representatives, drivers and employees. Consider what steps you could take to reduce any risks and ensure that this information is properly communicated to employees and managers to ensure that the agreed safety procedures are followed.

All managers should be made aware that, in the event of a serious accident or incident, the health and safety authorities will investigate the role of individuals within the management chain. They will not hesitate to prosecute them, either in addition to or instead of the company that they are employed by, should there be a serious management failing, particularly a failure to implement or adequately supervise documented safe working practices.

For more information contact;

Ron Reid // T: 0870 863317 // E: ron.reid@shoosmiths.co.uk