

PREVENTION OF FALLS – TRUCKS

1ST EDITION

JUNE 2005

The following information is provided for people in the workplace who have responsibilities under the Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Act 2004 for ensuring a safe and healthy environment. This guidance is intended to illustrate practical methods of reducing the likelihood of injuries from falls, both above and below two metres. You should also check the Occupational Health and Safety (Prevention of Falls) Regulations 2003 and the OHS Act to determine the legal requirements that relate to your specific situation.

Drivers are frequently required to work at height. The design of the vehicle, the type of load transported, the collection and delivery points can all lead to the driver having to access the vehicle and trailer frequently. This can place drivers and other employees at increased risk of falling from height when:

- loading or unloading goods (or livestock);
- arranging and restraining loads;
- checking a load at a loading bay or on route;
- checking welfare of livestock;
- entering and exiting the cabin;
- tarping or un-tarping; and
- performing maintenance.

RISK ASSESSMENT

If there is a risk of a fall from height, a risk assessment must be undertaken of that task. The risk assessment must consider:

- the nature and duration of the task; and
- the physical surroundings and conditions in which the task is undertaken.

It is also important to consider what equipment, tools or materials will be used in performing the task.

Once you have identified where falls could occur in your operations and have assessed the risks involved, appropriate risk controls (or safety measures), such as those outlined below, can be put in place. Several safety measures have been identified in this guide, however, new safety measures are being developed all the time. Talk to your suppliers to see if a solution that better fits your requirements exists. Remember, for falls hazards in excess of two metres you must use the highest level of risk control that is reasonably practicable.

WORKING AT GROUND LEVEL

Many vehicles have been designed or modified so that drivers do not work at heights of more than two metres. For example, some fuel and bulk liquid tankers now have all tank fittings, etc, arranged so that all loading and unloading can be carried out from ground level. Many dump trucks and trailers are now fitted with ground level tarping systems. Tarping of general cargo can also be undertaken from ground level by using tarping gantries or tarp spreaders mounted on a heavy duty forklift.

Tasks should be reviewed to see if working at height can be removed by performing the same task, or part of the task, from ground level or from a solid platform.

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1.0 Tarping from the ground using a 'Barney Beam'.

FALL PROTECTION WHEN WORKING AT HEIGHTS

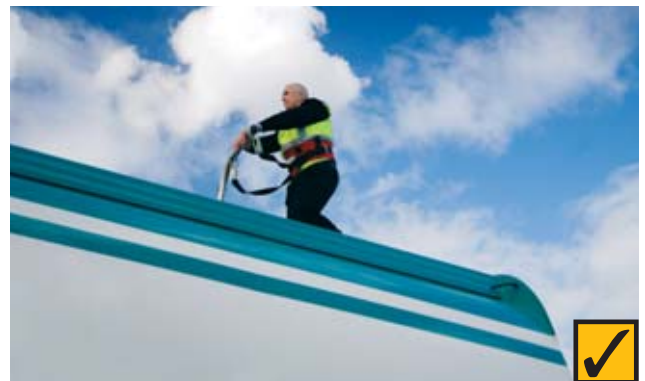
If the task cannot be done on the ground or from a solid platform, it may be necessary to install a passive fall protection device such as a temporary work platform, or guard rail. Guard rails on vehicles are becoming more common and popular and are often retro-fitted to existing vehicles. Where there is height or width restrictions in transport, guard rails are often designed to fold flat until needed.



2.0 Examples of using guard railing for various tasks.

It is becoming more common for customers to require some form of fall protection device to be used by the driver before they are allowed to load or unload material at the workplace. This has led, in some circumstances, to the use of work positioning systems involving the use of harnesses by drivers.

Some worksites have installed overhead frameworks that provide anchor points or cables to which the fall protection device is attached before accessing the tops of vehicles. These structures are very effective but rely on drivers to be suitably trained in fall protection and to use the harnesses available.



3.0 Using a travel restraint system when working on top of a truck.

Some companies have also integrated anchor points or cables in the container or trailer design. These points and runners allow drivers to clip a harness on and undertake inspections (or welfare stops in the case of livestock transport) with reduced risk of falling to the ground and reduced risk of injury. Some of the systems are work positioning systems, others are only fall arrest systems.



4.0 Person wearing full arrest system.

There is a major difference between the two types of systems and drivers need to be aware and prepare for the associated risks with both. Work positioning systems such as a travel restraint system are preferred as they substantially reduce the risk of a fall by not allowing the person to move beyond a designated point where they can fall. A fall arrest system will only restrict the distance a person can fall, not prevent the fall from occurring. Fall arrest systems should only be used where work positioning systems, guard railing or elevated work platforms are not reasonably practicable and where a person can be rescued

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immediately. Situations where they may be useful are where the person has rungs or structures they can grab hold of and rescue themselves if they do fall. Two examples are livestock transport or when anchored to vertical steps on some tankers.



5.0 Person wearing a fall arrest harness.

Where a fall arrest system is used it is critical to ensure the person is not left suspended if there is a fall. Emergency procedures must be implemented to rescue them immediately. After a few minutes injuries can occur and, if left suspended for up to 10 minutes, lack of circulation to vital organs may occur leading to possible death.

Any associated risks arising from falls from height must also be addressed using safe work procedures. For example – in the case of livestock transport, when using fall arrest systems the driver may find themselves close to livestock leading to the stock becoming agitated.

ACCESS AT DELIVERY SITES

Some companies are requiring some workplaces that receive regular deliveries to ensure adequate access facilities for their drivers when loading/unloading materials or re-filling/refuelling tanks. Employers and/or drivers should notify workplaces where access is a known problem that results in a fall hazard and request fall prevention measures be put in place before deliveries are made. In many instances an elevated work platform (mobile or fixed) or adequate guard railing or equivalent around the loading area or structure will solve any potential problem with limited cost involved. There are various designs available commercially.

DURATION OF TASK

Long tasks and tasks that are undertaken frequently need more substantial control measures than shorter and infrequent tasks. Using a harness to restrict a fall may be suitable for a short task such as unloading a single package or opening a tank lid on the odd occasion, but longer tasks like repairing vehicles, cleaning them, painting them and mounting cages on trays, for instance, require a more substantial control measure. These may involve an elevated work

platform or walkway, scissor lift, scaffold, mobile scaffold platform or a purpose-designed workshop. Step platforms can also be very effective at reducing the risk of falls in these situations.

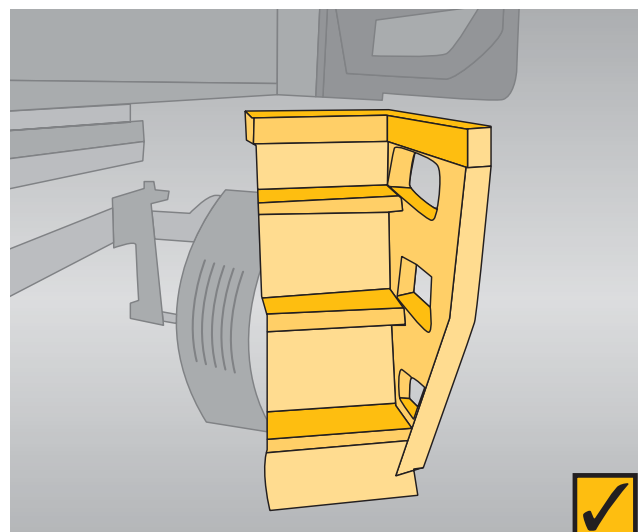
The expected environmental conditions, such as weather, temperature, ground surface, traffic and pedestrian proximity will also affect the type of safety measure chosen.



6.0 Use of mobile work platform to undertake maintenance.

CABIN ACCESS

Some construction and mining vehicles have a cabin that is higher than two metres from ground level. Even for cabins below two metres it is common for drivers to injure themselves getting in and out of the cabin. Suitable steps and handrails should be installed to reduce this risk. Steps should be non-slip and deep enough to provide a stable access platform. Handrails should be low enough to allow for a comfortable grip and long enough to provide a continuous hand grip up the steps. Drivers should always be facing the cabin when exiting and never jump down.

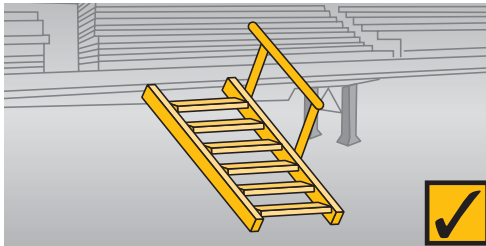


7.0 Non-slip steps for accessing cabin.

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GETTING TO AND FROM A TRAY

To reduce the height at which drivers need to access the load and to allow access to anchor points, some trucks are being fitted with retractable or foldaway steps. These step systems provide a safer way of accessing and getting down from a tray or accessing material on the tray than jumping up or down. They can substantially reduce the related risk of sprain and strain and other injuries, as well as the risk of falls at lower levels.



8.0 Retractable steps to access tray.

Portable step platforms in various shapes and sizes are becoming more common with designs that allow them to be transported more easily. These platforms are more stable than a ladder and where it's reasonably practicable to store them on a truck, they can also be used for accessing or checking a load on route. They can also be used in some instances when maintenance is required either on route or at a depot.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

The OHS Prevention of Falls Regulations requires emergency procedures to be in place wherever fall prevention measures are used (*excludes situations where work is undertaken from ground or a solid construction*). This requirement applies also to fall prevention measures involving trucks.

The procedures must ensure the rescue of an employee in the event of a fall and the provision of first aid. This is fairly straightforward at a fixed location such as a depot or loading facility, but is more difficult if the driver has to stop on the side of the road. In this instance, procedures should be in place so that, where possible, the driver stops at a location with other people in attendance in case a fall occurs to assist with rescue. Employers should ensure all drivers have access to a mobile phone, pager, some other device or a procedure for alerting emergency services and/or other people when assistance is needed.

MORE INFORMATION

WorkSafe Victoria

Specific information on working at heights can be obtained by contacting WorkSafe on 1800 136 089.

Further information on preventing falls from vehicles can be obtained from industry associations, relevant government departments and other transport industry information sources.

Acts and Regulations

Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004
Occupational Health and Safety (Prevention of Falls) Regulations 2003
Occupational Health and Safety (Plant) Regulations 1995
Acts and regulations are available from Information Victoria on 1300 366 356 or online at www.dms.dpc.vic.gov.au.

Publications

Prevention of Falls in General Construction (Code of Practice No. 28, 2004)
Prevention of Falls in Housing Construction (Code of Practice No. 29, 2004)
Guide to Manual Order Picking
Forklift Safety

These Codes and other falls prevention information are available from WorkSafe at www.workcover.vic.gov.au.

Australian Standards

Standards Australia has some useful information on ladders and fall protection devices available from www.standards.com.au.

Other tools that may assist with fall prevention

- Job analysis sheets
- Visual observations of work process
- Industry and union publications and forums
- Professional Association newsletters and forums
- Suppliers and suppliers magazines
- Manufacturer's instructions
- Consultation with Emergency Services on emergency procedures required for a particular job

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