



Health & Safety: What you need to know.

1) Penalties for health and safety failings

Companies failing to take steps to ensure the health and safety of their employees, and others affected by their work, can be prosecuted under the [Health and Safety at Work Act](#). You could face an unlimited fine, or even imprisonment.

If a work-related death is found to be the result of serious management failings, your company could also be prosecuted under the [Corporate Manslaughter Act](#).

There are similar penalties for breaching the Road Traffic Act, while anyone injured as a result of your business could launch a civil claim for compensation.

As well as the risk of prosecution and associated costs, your company's reputation may also suffer if you're involved in a high-profile accident.

2) Managing health and safety

Employers are legally required to:

- Put appropriate arrangements in place for managing health and safety. If you have five or more employees, these need to be set down in a written policy. Download a [policy template](#) from the HSE website.
- Assess the risks to the health and safety of employees and others who may be affected by your work activities. If you have five or more employees, you need to record the significant findings of the assessment
Download [guidance on risk assessments](#) and an example of a [haulage company risk assessment](#) from the HSE website.
- Provide workers with the information, instruction and supervision required for them to carry out their jobs safely
- Consult with employees on health and safety issues
- Co-operate and co-ordinate with other employers where necessary
You can find advice on [assessing site-based risks](#) on the HSE website

3) Including drivers in your risk assessment

Your risk assessment should cover anyone who drives for work, including car and van drivers and motorcycle and bicycle riders. The situation is the same whether the employee is using a company vehicle, or their own for work purposes.

As well as driving on public roads, you should include transport operations on your own and other people's sites.



Download [driving at work guidance](#) from the HSE website. The [HSE's 'Workplace Transport Safety'](#) publication is available to buy from the same website.

4) Safety at other organisations' sites

To stay on the right side of the law, you need to agree safety responsibilities with your customers and suppliers. You can then identify reasonably practicable steps to allow deliveries to be completed safely.

See www.hse.gov.uk/workplacetransport/information/cooperation.htm for more detail.

5) Safe loading/unloading

Staff are at risk of being struck by other vehicles, or the load itself, during loading and unloading.

Where drivers are unable to stay inside their cab while the load is moved, you should ensure they have a designated safe area from which to observe the loading/unloading.

For more information, you can buy the [Freight Transport Association's](#) 'Designing for deliveries' publication (ISBN 0 902991 66 3).

6) Vehicle loads

Unrestrained loads pose a risk to both loading staff and other road users. The risks include:

- The load being shed in transit
- Vehicles becoming unstable and overturning as a result of the load shifting
- Loads which have moved during transit falling off at the delivery point

When loading vehicles, bear in mind that:

- You can't exceed the maximum gross vehicle weight and individual axle weight limits
- The load should be spread out evenly so it's as low as possible – this means it'll be more stable when the vehicle accelerates, brakes or changes direction and you're less likely to place excess stress on whatever restraint is used
- If you've got a number of stops to make, think about the effect this could have on the total load weight. For example, removing part of the load from behind the rear axle of a vehicle or trailer will reduce the gross vehicle weight, but it will increase the weight on the front axles

When a vehicle changes direction, an unrestrained cargo isn't secure and it's wrong to assume the weight of the load will keep it in position. In fact, heavier loads are more likely to move when the vehicle is in motion.



7) The driver's duty

Loading and unloading should be carried out by trained staff that are aware of the risks involved. The driver is ultimately responsible for the load carried on their vehicle, however, regardless of whether they were involved in securing the load.

Further information on the **safe loading of vehicles** is available from the [HSE](#) and [Department for Transport](#) .

8) Falls from height

Falls in the freight industry are a major cause of injuries and fatal accidents.

Common accidents include falls from trailers, tail-lifts and truck cabs. The majority of falls from tipper lorries occur during sheeting and unsheeting.

The need for access at height can be removed with:

- Ground-level controls
- Automatic sheeting devices
- Sliding connectors (mavis rails) which remove the need to climb up onto the fifth wheel area to link airlines and electrical connections from the cab to the trailer unit

You might also be able to arrange loads so they can be removed mechanically.

Where work at height can't be avoided, you need to consider what can be reasonably done to improve the safety of those involved. This might include:

- Providing a suitable means of access, such as steps and ladders with suitable handholds
- Providing safety footwear with appropriate anti-slip properties and ankle support
- Specifying safety features when buying new vehicles
- Educating drivers about the risks of jumping from cab trucks and reminding them to never walk backwards on a trailer.

See also:

HSE guidance on [sheeting and unsheeting](#)

Information on HSE's 2009 [falls from vehicles campaign](#)

HSE guidance on [preventing falls from vehicles](#)

["Sheeting and unsheeting of non-tipper lorries, HSE scoping report"](#)



9) Vehicle parking

Unsafe practices when coupling and uncoupling large goods vehicles can lead to vehicles or trailers rolling away. This can result in serious injury to individuals and damage to property.

Make sure drivers are trained in a safe system of work for the vehicle they drive. See our driver training page for more detail.

You can also download the HSE guidance on [coupling and uncoupling](#)

10) Reversing of vehicles

Almost a quarter of all deaths at work involve vehicles reversing.

Try to remove the need for reversing altogether by setting up one-way systems, where possible.

Where reversing is unavoidable, organise routes that minimise the need for reversing. Trained banksmen should also be used, where necessary.

Download the [HSE guidance on reversing](#).

11) Helplines and more advice from Health & Safety Executive (HSE) and Freight Transport Association (FTA)

You can also ring the HSE/FTA workplace transport advice line on 0870 099 0099 for free advice.

We've outlined some of the issues most likely to result in fatal or serious injuries, but this list isn't exhaustive so please feel free to visit HSE's website www.hse.gov.uk/haulage/ for further guidance