



PROJECT REPORT Moving Goods Safely September – December 2007

Appendix 1.1

Summary

The aim of this project was to secure improvements in movement of goods in retail and warehouse premises and to participate in the Sussex County wide initiative. 16 inspections were carried out including three during one day jointly with an HSE inspector. Variable standards were observed. The project raised the profile of the manual handling, vehicle falls and transport safety issues and lead to some enforcement.

Method

Inspections were carried out at Builders Merchants, Furniture stores, a large office and a the depot for a milk delivery firm. A standard letter was given to employers asking them to review related issues and mentioning key points. On the back of this letter was reproduced the HSE poster and list of 10 steps to prevent falls from vehicles. Colour copies of the HSE poster "If you work on vehicles" were given out.

Companies were assessed against the relevant HSE risk control indicators and a topic inspection form was used to record findings. For four inspections the form produced by the County Health and Safety enforcement liaison Group was used but this was found to be very time consuming and take up an unreasonable amount of the employers' time.

One company which has a head office in the Chichester District and 12 branches elsewhere was approached about the possibility of entering into Local Authority Partnership. They considered the matter at a board meeting but declined the offer of this extra assistance for fear that it would lead them into a commitment to invest more in health and safety than they may consider essential.

Findings – Examples of good practice discussed and observed

1. Some small businesses with few or no staff were seen to appropriately control hazards in part because of good communications. The people affected by business practices were working so closely with the proprietor as to be able to easily get problems.
2. The use of two staff as opposed to one to make deliveries of large items of furniture was observed to make the work significantly safer, but not all companies adopt this policy.
3. High visibility jackets and protective footwear was seen to afford safe greater protection.
4. At one company 2 back injuries had been caused by staff loading ladders onto van roofs. To improve work arrangements, the company had install the "Easi-load" ladder racking system to the roofs of their vans. This enables a ladder to be loaded and secured without any climbing onto the van roof.
5. One way traffic systems
6. A different safety message poster on back of the WC door each month.
7. The use of airport style ladders of various sizes in warehouses to provide safe access for picking orders.
8. The use of safety passports for builders' merchant delivery drivers to certify they have been trained and assessed for use of the unloading cranes and fork lift trucks
9. The use of monthly staff meetings as a time to routinely discuss safety issues.

10. The use of side hoops on one cubic metre building material bags to enable fork lift truck pick up of bags without driver having to climb onto lorry load area.
11. The use of the Builders Merchants' Federation to assist solve technical problems.
12. The use of spillage kits including sand.
13. Building materials restricted to a maximum of 25 kg weight.
14. Well designed Mercedes artic cabs with two lengthy handholds on either side of the cab doors and with 3 mud tolerant and highly slip resistant steps.
15. Non essential staff excluded from unloading areas at Builders Merchants.
16. Formal training arrangements for banksmen.
17. The use of outrigger pads for lorries unloading via crane operation. Plus operator wearing a hard hat because of dropping hook hazard.
18. The use of preslinged loads thus removing the need for drivers to climb onto loading area on site.

Findings – Examples of poor practice discussed and observed

1. The most serious issue observed was the often unsatisfactory arrangements for unloading building materials from lorries. Sometime drivers have boots covered with mud from building sites yet have to climb in wet conditions over building materials at height. The various solutions available were explored but there is no doubt that on occasions there are practical difficulties. The HSE campaign and new guidance on this topic was carefully considered.



2. Some of the articulated trailer units fitted out in the UK had inadequate access. The only ladder was a pull-out one at the rear with no hand holds above the flat bed. This issue was raised with the HSE.
3. Holes in concreted unloading yards where fork lift trucks were operating were observed.
4. Unsafe use of racking was seen such as large building material units left resting on only 2 bearers.
5. Unsafe pedestrian routes in areas where there are articulated lorry movements.
6. The use of self-employment arrangements leaving workers with less protection whilst management try to wash their hands of responsibilities.
7. The failure of employers to have arranged for the required periodic examination of lifting equipment as required by the lifting operations and lifting equipment Regulations.
8. The failure to train fork lift truck drivers in accordance with the approved code of practice.
9. Inadequate storage space creating poor working environment for manual handling.

10. Storage of stock on top of single storey offices in warehouses without edge protection, creating falls risk.
11. Use of poorly supervised / managed contractors to deliver goods.
12. The use of inadequately guarded teagle openings in warehouses for movement of goods to mezzanine level.
13. Warehouse racking not checked by a competent person and with no maximum load markings on bays.
14. No formal training of some driver crane operators working for builders merchants.
15. Customers with children observed wondering around the yard at builders merchants when fork lift truck and lorry movement in progress.
16. Broken steps used in some builders merchants.
17. Poorly maintained woodworking machinery at some builders merchants.

Resources

The equivalent of one month of an inspector's time was spend on this project.

Conclusions and opportunities for further action

1. Many hazards were addressed during this project and it was felt a worthwhile remit.
2. There needs to be developed more examples of good practice in the protection of drivers from falls when working on lorry load areas.
3. It was helpful being able to spend a day doing joint inspections with the HSE. We followed lorries making deliveries to different sites some of which were subject to HSE enforcement and some local authority enforcement.
4. I had three meetings with the Group Health and Safety Manager for a large local builders merchant. We discussed his Group's approach to Moving Goods Safely issues. They have 12 branches with a total of 600 staff. Approximately 20 formal accident notifications under RIDDOR are made each year. It is believed this "Local Authority Partnership" style approach makes good use of our resources.

Report by David Gibson, Senior Environmental Health Officer, 30 April 2008

Approved by Ian Brightmore, Environmental Health Manager, xxx May 2008

References

1. HELA Fit 3 – Portfolio of intended projects for LA and HSE partnership working. 2007/8
2. HELA LAC 85/13 – "Moving Goods Safely Project 07/08"
3. <http://www.hse.gov.uk/fallsfromvehicles/index.htm>
4. <http://www.hse.gov.uk/movinggoods/index.htm>