



**REVIEW THESE ARRANGEMENTS AS OFTEN AS NECESSARY**

Nearly a quarter of all deaths involving vehicles at work occur while the vehicle is reversing. Many more accidents do not result in injury but cause costly damage to vehicles, equipment and premises. Most of these accidents happen at low speeds and could be prevented by taking some simple safety precautions. This section aims to raise awareness of the dangers caused by reversing vehicles. It gives some practical advice on safety precautions. Advice for road vehicles and specialist off-road vehicles is also given in this section. These include lift trucks, site dumpers, goods vehicles and any other vehicle that may need to reverse.

**The Main Legal Requirements**

The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 requires employers to provide and maintain systems of work which are, so far as is reasonably practicable, safe. The Act also requires employers to take all reasonably practicable precautions to ensure the safety of their workers and members of the public.

The Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992 require the organization of traffic routes to ensure safety and their maintenance in an adequate condition.

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1992 require employers to assess all risks to the health and safety of their employees and anyone else who may be affected by their work activity. This risk assessment will identify what measures they need to take to comply with the law. The regulations also require employers to provide their employees with adequate health and safety training.

This means that you should look critically at how people can be put at risk and consider how reversing can be done safely and then take any reasonably practicable measures to reduce the risk of injury.

**Ensuring a Safe System of Work**

There is no set formula to follow that will create a safe system of work. The only way is to identify all the risks and decide how to tackle them. When considering the risk of an accident caused by a reversing vehicle, try to answer the following questions:

- What vehicle maneuvers will be necessary?
- Can you avoid the need to reverse vehicles?
- If vehicles must reverse, can you remove people from the area?
- Is there enough space for reversing?
- Do vehicles use the most suitable route when reversing?
- What training, instruction and supervision is going to be provided? And for whom?
- Have you considered all possible ways of dealing with the dangers of reversing vehicles?

**Measures to be Taken**

To ensure a safe system of work look first at operational aspects – the organization of the workplace, the training of drivers and the supervision of vehicle maneuvers – and then at physical measures such as fitting reversing alarms or using mirrors. Usually, no single measure will be enough – choose the measures, which are appropriate to tackling the risks in your workplace.

**Operational Measures;** You are advised to:

- Remove the need for reversing: this is your first priority. To remove the need for reversing you could establish one-way systems, set up 'drive through' loading and unloading positions, or allow greater space for storing materials. Try to consider all means of avoiding reversing before allowing vehicles to reverse.
- Exclude people from the area in which vehicles are permitted to reverse: where the need to reverse is unavoidable, try to specify and clearly mark areas where reversing is permitted. Ensure that your system of work prevents people from unnecessarily entering these danger areas. Try to design and construct the areas so that drivers and pedestrians who may need to enter can see demarcation lines. Consider creating 'vehicle only areas' and preventing workers and visiting drivers from entering this zone by using barriers with warning signs. When people near reversing vehicles wear high visibility clothing it will considerably improve their safety.
- Minimize the distance vehicles have to reverse.
- Make sure all staff are adequately trained: identify all the people who are involved with the reversing of vehicles and take into account their capabilities when allocating tasks and deciding what training they should be given. Drivers should be trained and competent to operate their vehicles safely. They may need different types of licences and training and special training may be required to deal with specific hazards such as vision problems with particular vehicles.
- Use a properly trained banksman or guide: a banksman should be used when needed to ensure safe reversing. The banksman should be a designated person whose tasks are to keep the reversing area free of pedestrians and to ensure a safe vehicle manoeuvre.
- Decide how the driver is to make and keep contact with the banksman: both the banksman and the driver should understand what signals are going to be used. Banksmen should be visible to drivers of reversing vehicles at all times and should stand in a safe position from which the reversing area can be seen clearly. Banksmen should wear high visibility clothing and ensure that their signals are seen clearly. If drivers lose sight of the person guiding the vehicle, they should stop immediately.
- Make sure all visiting drivers are briefed: you will need to consider how you are going to make drivers who are not your employees familiar with the layout of the workplace and follow your rules for reversing. For example, you could require visiting drivers to report and receive instructions before entering the workplace.
- Make sure all vehicle manoeuvres are properly supervised: management should supervise and monitor transport operations to ensure safe systems of work are always followed. All employees and visiting drivers should be aware of how you operate and supervise your safe system of work.

**Physical Measures;** The following measures could reduce the risk of accidents:

- Increase the area the driver can see: site layouts can be designed (and modified if necessary) to increase visibility for drivers and pedestrians. Most vehicles already use external, side mounted and rear view mirrors to maximum benefit. These ought to be kept clean. However, a large blind zone may still remain. In this situation consider, if appropriate, the use of refractive lenses in the rear window or a closed circuit television system in the cab. Putting up mirrored surfaces in the reversing area may also help. If, despite such measures, drivers cannot see behind the vehicle, they should leave their cab and check behind before reversing.
- Fit a reversing alarm: many vehicles are already fitted with reversing alarms. These ought to be kept in working order. Reversing alarms sound when the vehicle is reversing and help to warn people of the danger. Therefore, it is important that the alarm does not just become part of the background noise of the workplace or cause confusion when more than one vehicle is reversing. Reversing alarms are not 'fail safe' – consider other warning methods such as flashing warning lights and use them where they are more appropriate.
- Use other safety devices: for example, barriers to stop vehicles over-running steep edges. Trip devices fitted to the rear of the vehicle that stop it when something is hit may be appropriate in some specific situations. Sensing devices that scan the area into which the vehicle is reversing may warn the driver of a hazard they have not seen. None of these measures are sufficient on their own, but a carefully chosen combination of precautions may be effective.

**Reversing in Safety – Action Checklist;** Have you: Identified all reversing operations?

- Identified who is at risk?
- Eliminated reversing operations where possible?
- Removed all pedestrians from danger areas wherever possible?
- Ensured safe systems of work – including proper training and supervision?
- Modified the workplace to make operations safer where it is reasonably practicable to do so?