



Safely immobilising heavy vehicles and trailers

Campaign report

Unsafe vehicle immobilisation has led to a significant number of fatalities in Queensland. There have also been numerous incidents involving injury and/or significant property damage due to heavy vehicles rolling away or moving.

This report details objectives and outcomes of a Workplace Health and Safety Queensland (WHSQ) assessment campaign designed to identify the causes of unsafe immobilisation and provides businesses with resources on how to manage these risks.

During the campaign, WHSQ identified that many workers were not engaging the braking system or using any other method to immobilise their vehicle or trailer. Simply applying the braking system could have prevented a quarter of the fatalities noted above.

Queensland prosecutions

- In June 2016 a company was fined \$120,000 following the fatality of a worker run over by an uncontrolled mobile yard crane travelling down a slope.
- In December 2016 a company was fined \$60,000 following the fatality of a worker who was struck by a prime mover when the vehicle began rolling backwards on an incline.
- In May 2017 a company was fined \$60,000 following the fatality of a worker who was run over by a truck and trailer.

The campaign

The campaign's objectives were to:

- provide examples of best practice including dedicated guidance materials, case studies and self-assessment tools
- improve industry knowledge through short films, a webinar and industry publications
- conduct 220 assessments of heavy vehicles and/or trailers at workplaces during 2016-17
- increase industry awareness and understanding of managing risks and encourage workplaces to use controls for these risks in their safety management systems
- focus on directed compliance outcomes through 180 assessments of heavy vehicles and/or trailers at workplaces conducted by WHSQ inspectors in 2018.

Inspections

Inspectors visited distribution centres, warehouses, depots, and large retail, construction and manufacturing sites throughout

Queensland. They assessed systems of work for immobilisation of heavy vehicles and trailers, as well as other safety concerns including workers being under trucks, maintaining trucks or coupling and decoupling trailers.

Results

Various workplaces implemented controls to address safety risks directly, including phasing in mandatory installation of an audible park brake alarm. Only vehicles assessed as compliant could gain access to their site. Enforcement action was taken when risks from unsafe immobilisation of trucks and trailers were not effectively managed. Other notices covered risks seen at workplaces not directly related to the safe immobilising campaign, including electrical safety equipment testing, unrestrained gas bottles, out of date fire extinguishers and hazardous chemicals.

WHSQ inspectors issued a total of 50 improvement notices between February and July 2018.

No or inadequate safe system of work

Twenty-eight per cent of these improvement notices were for an inadequate or no safe system of work addressing the safe

immobilisation of heavy vehicles and trailers when on site or on the road.

Observations included:

- workplaces with no occupational health and safety management system (OHSMS), policies or procedures in place
- managers relying on driver behaviour to ensure they were using the braking system or immobilising the vehicle another way
- even if there was a system in place, some drivers or workers could not confirm they had been told about the system.

Inadequate training, information, supervision or instruction

In 22 per cent of workplaces where an improvement notice was given, drivers and other workers had not been provided with training, information, supervision or instruction on safe immobilisation of vehicles and did not understand existing information. In addition, the person conducting a business or undertaking (PCBU) hadn't ensured the information, training and instruction was provided in a way that was understood by the worker.

Immobilising trucks, and coupling and decoupling trailers

In ten per cent of cases improvement notices were issued to workplaces where the risks of vehicles being unsafely immobilised had not been controlled — potentially resulting in a truck rolling away. In addition workers did not know the safe procedures, or risks to themselves or the public, of coupling and decoupling trailers.

Inadequate maintenance and risks when working under trucks and trailers

Twelve per cent of workplaces were issued with a notice for not adequately controlling the risk to safety of workers conducting work under trucks and trailers. In these instances, truck and trailer maintenance was a contributing factor. Observations included:

- axle stands being used under heavy vehicles were not load rated
- maintenance on a vehicle hoist had not been conducted
- no maintenance processes and procedures followed by workers to safely use 6.5 tonne heavy vehicle hoists
- hoists were overdue to be checked by a competent person.

Outcomes

One of the most effective ways to improve the safety of owner drivers and transport operators is for businesses and the supply chain to implement mandatory safety requirements in their contractual arrangements on known safety issues.

This approach has successfully influenced the standards of transport sub-contractors and contractors to make safety changes. For example, Woolworths identified the potential high risk of trucks rolling away on their sites and implemented mandatory requirements for heavy vehicles entering their sites to have safer design and engineering controls such as a braking system alarm. This has resulted in a substantial increase of owner-drivers and smaller transport operators improving their safety measures.

Resources

Workplace Health and Safety Queensland has a variety of practical resources to help workplaces manage risks identified, including:

- OHSMS [self-assessment tool](#)
- Safely immobilising heavy vehicles and trailers [general guidance](#)
- [Industry case study](#) Russell Transport: Retrofitting a hand-brake alarm
- [Industry solution](#) for managing the risks of workers being hit or crushed by heavy vehicles and trailers
- Safe systems to immobilise heavy vehicles and trailers [film](#)
- Coupling and decoupling trailers safely [film](#)
- Safely immobilising heavy vehicles and trailers [webinar](#)
- Heavy vehicles and trailers hitting and crushing workers [safety alert](#).