

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The HSE launched its 'Falls from Vehicles' campaign in 2007 to reduce the numbers of injuries and deaths caused by falls from vehicles across all industries.

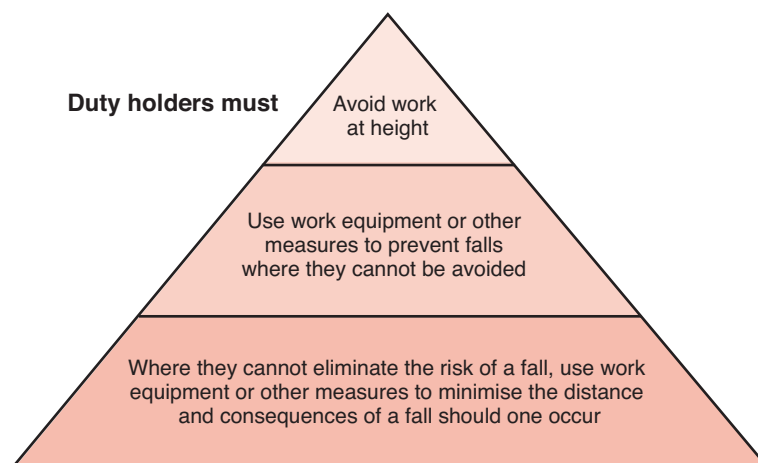
Three million people in Great Britain work on or near vehicles as part of their everyday work. Getting on and off a vehicle to carry out a loading/unloading operation is part of a scaffolders daily routine and is often viewed as incidental to their main job. Because of this, the risks involved may not be properly considered by both the scaffolders and their manager. The overall economic and human cost to businesses in the UK is currently in the order of £36 million per annum.

The purpose of this guide is to provide guidance on best practice when loading/unloading scaffolding materials from vehicles, to ensure that suitable and sufficient assessments of the risks and methods of work are undertaken and to ensure the safety of scaffolding operatives and others who may be affected by their work is assured. If your vehicle is visiting sites run by other companies then you will need to discuss this with them to ensure that the necessary facilities to allow driver's safe access are available.

When carrying out a risk assessment the employer should seek assistance from the operatives who use the vehicle – as they are most likely to know how the work is really carried out and will generally have some good ideas about how to make it safer and more efficient.

### 2. THE WORK AT HEIGHT REGULATIONS

The overriding principle of the Work at Height Regulations (WAHR) is that employers must do all that is reasonably practicable to prevent anyone falling. The hierarchy for managing work at height is as follows:



All work at height must be properly planned and organised:

- Ensure that no work at height is carried out if it is safe and reasonably practicable to do it other than at height
- Ensure that the work at height is properly planned, supervised and carried out as safely as is reasonably practicable
- Ensure that emergencies and rescue procedures are planned for
- Take account of the risk assessment findings carried out under Regulation 3 of the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations
- Take particular account when young persons are working in the area

### **3. INFORMATION REQUIRED TO PRODUCE THE RISK ASSESSMENT**

The risk assessment should give particular consideration to:

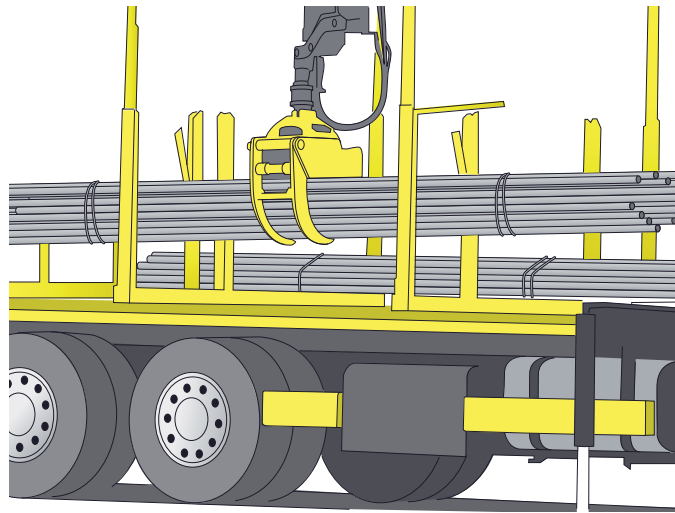
- the immaturity and inexperience of the employees and any consequential lack of awareness of risks
- any personal factors, including poor health, illness, disabilities, which may increase risk
- health aspects and the completion of medical questionnaires as appropriate
- the health and safety training to be given to the employee in general and as part of the practical skills of the tasks
- the potential exposure to any load i.e. chemical, biological or physical agents
- the nature and layout of the loading/unloading area in particular plant, tools and equipment that can cause slips, trips and falls
- the types of loading/unloading equipment, methods of use and work activities to be undertaken and the use of a trained and qualified banksman, slinger and signaller
- ensure loading equipment is pre-use checked by the operator and that mandatory inspection records are available i.e. load certificated
- the provision of collective measures i.e. gantries, platforms, vehicle side netting systems, air bags and docking stations where work at height is unavoidable
- the installation of personal protection equipment which permits the attachment of a fall protection system, i.e. harness and lanyard whilst unloading
- where collective protection measures are not available, minimise the time permitted for operatives to work on the back of a vehicle
- secure and even distribution of loading of materials i.e. scaffolding materials

### **4. MEASURES TO REDUCE RISKS**

The employer must ensure that all employee(s) are supervised by a competent person and that any risk is reduced to the lowest level that is reasonably practicable.

Consideration should be given to the following list, which is not exhaustive:

- avoid working at height, where possible, utilise lifting equipment i.e. crane / fork lift truck, demountable lorry load beds, load with fork lift, crane

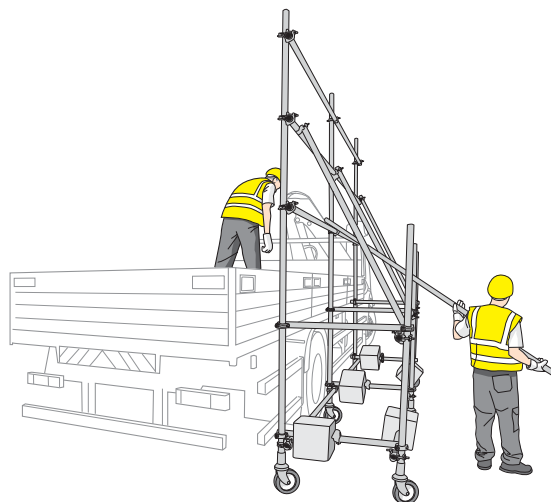


- undertaking work which is beyond an operatives physical or psychological capacity
- undertaking work which involves risks to health from extremes of cold or heat
- undertaking work which involves a risk of accidents, which an employee could not have recognised or avoided due to lack of experience or training
- for work which involves risks to health from excessive noise refer to NASC guidance SG11
- in the event of a fall, rescue/evacuation must be considered when wearing fall arrest equipment
- safe access and egress on to the vehicle bed so as not to cause injury i.e. edge protection, steps and gantries with suitable lighting
- any unforeseen hazards must be reported immediately to the operatives supervisor

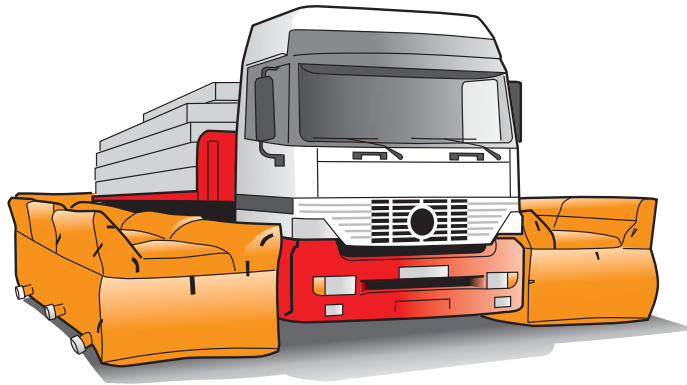
## 5. CONSIDERATIONS TO REDUCE RISK

### Collective Measures

- Edge protection fitted to vehicle trailers
- Portable bays which fit around all exposed edges of the vehicle trailer

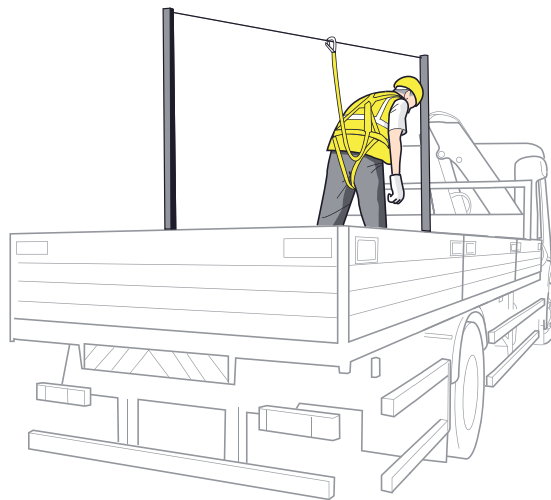


- Air bags fitted around the vehicle whilst being loaded / unloaded



### Personal Measures

- Horizontal safety line fitted down the central elevation of the vehicle bed



- Counter balanced overhead inertia reel fall protection system
- Fall protection system fitted to HIAB crane or vehicle bed

*Note:* All the above measures should be considered in conjunction with the Principal Contractor

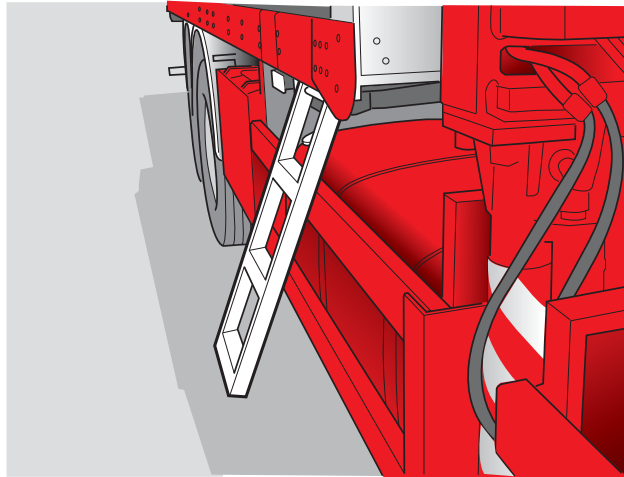
## 6. SAFE ACCESS ON TO THE VEHICLE

How often workers need to get on and off the load area will vary according to the type of vehicle, type of load, method of loading/unloading and the need for sheeting etc. Where possible, choose a vehicle/loading system that minimises the need for access to the load area, using the hierarchy of controls for work at height.

If work at height is unavoidable, safe access should be provided, with preference to

- vehicle-based equipment:

- fold-out steps should be sturdy. These are a common retrofit solution. If they are flimsy or too small, they will not do the job



- a suitable placed handhold should be fitted next to the steps. Rigid handholds are preferred over ropes or straps as they are less likely to fail during use
- steps are better than ladders, they give a more secure means of access
- side impact barriers or under run bars are not usually designed as steps. The surfaces are not generally slip resistant. Their position under the body of the vehicle requires the person to swing out from the vehicle to climb up (and it is almost impossible to use them to climb down). It can also be difficult to position a usable handhold nearby
- position access where it is most needed, i.e. side, rear and make sure other equipment does not get in the way of access points
- if tail lifts are used for access to the vehicle as well as for load handling you should consider providing suitable handholds and guardrails

*Note:* If vehicle equipped access is not possible, then a site-based provision may be a solution, such as pairs of platforms with access steps and handrails to provide access to the vehicle and a place to work from.

## 7. SAFE LOADING / STACKING OF MATERIALS ON AND /OR IN VEHICLES

Accidents can occur when employees are struck by part of a falling load, by being struck or run over by a moving or overturning vehicle, or by falling from height. Incidents have also occurred where drivers have pulled away from a loading bay before unloading has been completed. In contrast safe loading / stacking not only reduces risk, but also enhances site efficiency.

It is therefore essential that a clear and unambiguous system of work for the loading and unloading of vehicles is established between the company delivering goods, and the recipient of these goods at individual premises.

Loading and unloading operations should be carried out in an area away from passing traffic, pedestrians and others not involved in the loading/unloading operation. These operations should be carried out according to a safe system of work, specific to the individual premises.

Give consideration to:

- stacking the materials on the vehicle so that the load is evenly spread

- stacking/loading materials ensuring that the load is level, firm and consider using packing where necessary
- ensuring the load is secure by using fit for purpose ratchet straps and/or ropes of sufficient strength
- ensuring that operatives wear suitable protective clothing such as gloves and safety boots
- using handling accessories where appropriate

**References:**

The HSE have produced a 'Site Inspection – Workplace Transport Checklist' that is available to download at [www.hse.gov.uk/forms/transport/wtchk1.pdf](http://www.hse.gov.uk/forms/transport/wtchk1.pdf)

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