

Lock and load

Road haulage plays a vital role in keeping the UK economy running, but the risks associated with the sector are not always as well managed as they should be. **Nina Day** outlines some of the simple measures that should be taken to prevent injuries during loading and unloading processes.

WHETHER IT'S RAW MATERIALS, CONSUMER goods, food and drink, parcels, or plant equipment, we all rely on lorries to keep our production lines running and our supermarket shelves stocked.

Companies have invested heavily in recent years to make their systems more efficient and more productive. But when things go wrong in the transport chain, either on the road or in the workplace, the effects can be devastating.

Road haulage and warehousing has one of the highest injury rates of all industry sectors. For many otherwise low-risk companies, loading and/or unloading goods vehicles will be their most dangerous work activity, but the risks may not always be appreciated until something goes wrong. Every year, there are thousands of workplace injuries during loading and/or unloading. This is a significant cost, not only to the people who are injured but also to their employers and society as a whole.

The good news is that there are some straightforward ways of reducing the number of incidents in the road-haulage sector and preventing injury to workers and members of the public.

Common incidents

Almost half of all loading/unloading incidents reported to the HSE fall into four categories: struck by a vehicle (this often involves someone being struck by a forklift truck); falls from height; struck by a falling object; and slips and trips.



When stacking loads, it's important to make sure the stacks are stable

A significant proportion of these incidents occur as a result of the load on the vehicle having moved in transit. Quite simply, if a load is not secured to, or within, a vehicle, it can and will move independently of the vehicle every time the vehicle changes speed, or direction. It doesn't matter how heavy the load is, or how carefully the vehicle is driven; if the load is not secured, it will move. Drivers have been killed by shifting loads smashing through the headboard into the cab, and by unstable loads collapsing on to them during unloading. But it's not just the driver

of the vehicle who is at risk; even small, light items falling from a vehicle at speed can kill, or seriously injure a pedestrian, or cyclist.

Legal duties

The legal responsibility to secure loads for road transport is made clear in the Road Traffic Act (section 40) and the Road Vehicles (Construction and Use) Regulations (regulation 100). The driver, and anyone who causes or permits the vehicle to be loaded, must ensure that there is no danger of injury to any person. Employers and the self-

