



Labour

HAZARD ALERT

Loading and Unloading Flatbed Trucks at Shipping and Receiving

Background

A number of serious incidents have occurred whereby truck drivers were fatally injured or suffered amputations when unstable freight fell from a flatbed trailer and struck the driver. These accidents occurred during loading or unloading operations at sites not under the control of the driver's employer, and when motorized material handling equipment was being operated by employees of the sites receiving the material. Drivers have a vital role in the proper loading of their trucks, because they are responsible for the road-worthiness and stability of the load. Unstable loads may consist of pipe, timber, or other materials.

Hazards

Factors that can lead to accidents or injury on or around flatbed trailers while loading or unloading loads include:

- being unfamiliar with the flow of work in an active environment at the customer's site;
- failing to maintain good communications with the operator of the materials handling equipment;
- using an unknown or untrustworthy means of securing freight during the loading process;
- working or standing in an area where the load could fall if it shifts during the loading process;
- assisting in a loading or unloading process with which the driver is not familiar;
- becoming distracted during the process by performing other tasks, like preparing straps or chains; and
- having little or no direction from a supervisor, or not having a procedure to follow.

Eliminating and Controlling the Hazard

Drivers must be aware of the following measures that can help prevent accidents and injuries during the loading or unloading of materials onto or off of flatbed trucks:

- be aware of all hazards;
- know the employer's hazard prevention program and how it applies at a customer's site;
- use all the safety materials available at the site such as chocks, wedges, cradles, shoring bars, tiedown strapping or dunnage;
- work cooperatively with others involved in the process;
- work within the controls or procedures set out by their employer and those of the shipper or receiver;
- keep a safe distance from the load in case of a sudden shift;
- develop a method for tying down the load to avoid working at heights without fall protection;
- ensure the stability of the trailer's air suspension when heavy loads are applied or removed; and
- be aware of the right to refuse to work if a process appears dangerous.

Legislative Requirements

Employers shall ensure that the health and safety of employees working during the process of loading or unloading of a truck is protected at all sites. The *Canada Labour Code* Part II extends beyond the conventional work place and requires that employers ensure that the health and safety of employees is protected while conducting all work activities. Regulations require that hazards be known, quantified and controlled.

The Hazard Prevention Program found in Part XIX of the *Canada Occupational Health and Safety Regulations* (COHSR) requires employers to identify hazards in the workplace. The Labour Program's Hazard Prevention Program Guide provides assistance in implementing a hazard prevention program that meets Part XIX of the COHSR.

To ensure the health and safety of employees on site while loading or unloading a truck, employers must consult the Policy Health and Safety Committee (where they exist) or the Work Place Health and Safety Committee or Representative to:

- identify and assess hazards associated with working in unfamiliar work places;
- identify and assess hazards associated with working with each and every type of load the driver may carry;
- implement adequate control measures to address the assessed hazards, which could include using “no-go” zones during the loading process or simply not being involved;
- train drivers on safe working procedures for loading and unloading the trailer; and
- train employees on how to safely operate the necessary equipment.

Additional Resources:

For further information, please contact the ESDC Labour Program office at 1-800-641-4049. The Labour Program website provides information on occupational health and safety topics such as: Right to Know, Right to refuse dangerous work, and Health and Safety Committees. For further information on hazards associated with loading and unloading see the following publications “Aches and Pains – Loading and Unloading a Truck” http://www.labour.gc.ca/eng/health_safety/pubs_hs/loading_unloading.shtml and “Tarping and Untarping on a Flatbed Trailer” http://www.labour.gc.ca/eng/health_safety/pubs_hs/flatbed.shtml.
