

Heavy vehicles and trailers hitting or crushing workers

Published: 16 September 2014

Last Updated: 16 September 2014

[Purpose](#)

[Background](#)

[Contributing factors](#)

[Action required](#)

[Further information](#)

Purpose

To highlight the risks associated with workers being crushed or hit by heavy vehicles or trailers.

Background

There have been a number of recent incidents in Queensland where heavy vehicles or trailers have fatally crushed workers. In many cases, the vehicle had not been correctly immobilised.

Contributing factors

Some of the contributing factors to these incidents include:

- workers being under a heavy vehicle or trailer, or in its path
- unsafe systems of work being applied, such as poor separation of traffic from pedestrian areas
- failing to immobilise:
 - the handbrake of the vehicle not applied
 - the wheels of the heavy vehicle or trailer not immobilised (e.g. chocked)
 - components of the heavy vehicle or trailer not restrained or adequately supported
 - brakes malfunctioning
- not conducting a risk assessment before working on the vehicle.

Action required

Immobilising heavy vehicles

If an employee needs to work near a heavy vehicle, or between a heavy vehicle and another object, first make sure the vehicle is immobilised by:

- switching off the motor and removing the key from the ignition to render it inoperable
- applying the handbrake
- using wheel chocks, if required.

Establish a safe operating procedure and ensure workers follow it to eliminate the risk of anyone failing to immobilise their vehicle.

Consider installing a handbrake warning system to alert drivers when the handbrake has not been applied (these can be easily retro-fitted).

Working under heavy vehicles and trailers

For work under heavy vehicles and trailers, ensure an appropriate load support is used (e.g. stands or lifting devices).

Risk assessments before commencing work

Before commencing work, identify hazards and assess risks associated with working under and around heavy vehicles or trailers. Where appropriate:

- establish an exclusion zone that is clearly marked and enforced
- use safe work procedures for maintenance and repair tasks, and ensure that workers are trained in these procedures
- ensure worker training, experience and competency is consistent with the nature and complexity of the task.

Similar risks exist for light and smaller vehicles and a risk assessment should be conducted before commencing work.

Further information

Visit www.worksafe.qld.gov.au or call the WHS Infoline on 1300 369 915.