

Employers

As dutyholders, you have specific responsibilities under the Health and Safety at Work Act to ensure the health and safety of both your employees and those affected by your work activity.

If you are responsible for loading vehicles, you should ensure that they are loaded so they remain in a safe condition during loading, transit and unloading. You should decide who will carry out the loading, what training they should receive to do so, and how they will be supervised.

If it is safe to do so in your premises, you may decide to let drivers witness the loading of their vehicles. You should provide a safe place for them to stand so they are not endangered by moving vehicles during loading. If it is not appropriate for them to witness the loading, drivers should be given the opportunity to check the load before they take it out on the road. If a driver is not happy with the stability and/or security of the load, you should ensure that the load is assessed by a competent person and, if necessary, re-loaded and/or re-secured. Drivers should be asked to report load shifts so that you can take remedial action.

You, or a competent person appointed by you, should decide on the appropriate method of load securing for the load and the vehicle. If the chosen method involves drivers or loaders accessing the trailer bed you should provide safe access such as working platforms or access ladders. It is good practice to involve those actually doing the loading in the decision-making process, as they may be able to identify practical solutions.

Under the provisions of PUWER¹ 1998, load securing equipment should be maintained in good condition. You should have equipment inspected at regular intervals to ensure it is still suitable for use. This inspection can be carried out by an employee if they are competent to do so. You should ensure that those who will carry out the loading are suitably trained and are aware of the requirements for securing set out in the Department for Transport Code of Practice,

Risk assessment is a legal requirement that helps you to identify issues and take remedial action before they become serious problems. You may find it useful to develop a loading plan for the loads you transport. It is important to communicate with both the haulier and the delivery site when preparing the loading plan so that everyone knows what they are expected to be responsible for. You should think about how the load is to be unloaded as well as what happens if the load shifts in transit.

It is important for information about the load to be clearly communicated to the driver, and you should take account of possible driver handovers and/or language barriers. A loading docket that travels with the load may help to communicate information to the haulier and the delivery site. This can be as simple as a sketch showing the position of the load and the load securing system. The driver should be made aware of what is expected of him at the delivery site, i.e whether he should

¹ The Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations

report to security on arrival, whether he should remain in his cab during unloading, or whether he is expected to assist in the unloading.

<Safety in loading bays HSE guidance link

If you are responsible for hauling the load, you should ensure that you are using a suitable vehicle for the task and that the vehicle is loaded so that it is safe for transport on the road. You should communicate with both the supplier and the delivery site so that any issues can be identified and remedial action taken before they become problems.

Drivers should be made aware of how the vehicle is loaded; their experience may help the loader/s identify any problems before the vehicle sets out on its journey. Drivers should be given the opportunity to check the load before they take it out on the road. If it is necessary for a driver to witness vehicle loading, this should be from a safe position, away from vehicle movements. Your drivers should be aware of the principles of the Department for Transport Code of Practice on load securing.

The load should be secured to the trailer before the driver takes it out on the road. You should agree the method/s of load restraint with the supplier and ensure that the vehicle is suitable for the method chosen, i.e. for restraint bars you will need to ensure that the correct type of side rail is fitted. Remember that the curtains and weather-protection structure of a curtain-sided trailer are not suitable either for load containment or for securing load restraint equipment to. Some curtain-sided trailers may be constructed to the 'XL' standard laid down in BS EN 12642, but even then the curtains cannot be relied on to restrain the load.

If loads are to be secured using webbing straps and/or chains, you need to ensure that they can be secured either directly to the chassis of the trailer, or to rated attachment points. Rope hooks are not suitable attachment points. Straps and chains should not be used in the same assembly.

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It is important for information about the load to be clearly communicated to the driver, and you should take account of possible driver handovers and/or language barriers. A loading docket that travels with the load may help to communicate information to the driver and the delivery site. This can be as simple as a sketch showing the position of the load and the load securing system. The driver should be made aware of what is expected of him at the delivery site, i.e whether he should report to security on arrival, whether he should remain in his cab during unloading, or whether he is expected to assist in the unloading.

If you are responsible for purchasing vehicles, you should ensure that the vehicles you purchase are suitable for the loads you will transport and the reasonably foreseeable transport conditions.

If you are buying new trailers, you should work with the trailer manufacturer to select the correct type of trailer so that loads are transported safely. Remember that the curtains and weather protection structure are not suitable for load restraint. At the specification stage you should consider factors such as:

- What loads are to be transported, their size and weight
- Whether the loads can be placed against the bulkhead, or whether some kind of intermediate bulkhead may be required
- Whether a standard bulkhead is robust enough for the load being transported
- How loads are to be loaded onto the trailer, from the side or via the rear doors
- Whether special installations, e.g. coil wells are required
- How the load will be restrained, and whether built-in attachment points are required
- Whether the size and weight of the load requires a combination of restraint and containment for safe transport
- If access to the trailer bed is required, whether built-in steps are necessary and/or edge protection

There may be other factors specific to your operation that you will need to consider.

When buying secondhand trailers you should consider the above factors, and ensure that the trailer is in good condition and that its structural integrity has not been compromised.