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 **FreightBestPractice**
Scotland

Driver Safety Guide

Freight Guidance

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Introduction

As a professional driver, you are responsible for the safety of yourself, your vehicle and those around you. It is important that you understand how to safely operate and work in and around your vehicle during your working period.

By following the simple steps outlined in this Guide, you can help ensure your own safety and the safety of others.

Remember: professional drivers are champions of safety.

Freight best practice Scotland

This is part of a series of **FREE** publications produced by the Scottish Government under the Freight Best Practice Scotland programme. The material in this publication has been approved by the Driving Standards Agency (DSA) in the provision of Driver CPC training.

The Freight Best Practice programme provides a wide range of **FREE** information to help you improve the efficiency of your business.

How will this guide help you

Reducing the risk of injury and improving safety for drivers is important for everyone, but having the right advice to hand is sometimes difficult when you are out on the road.

This guide offers quick reference and can help you:

- prepare for the day's work
- understand your role and responsibilities
- learn about personal safety
- learn about vehicle safety
- learn about site safety
- feedback to your manager
- know where to find appropriate training

There are many manuals and codes of practice available on specific aspects of transport. This guide is only a summary of health and safety information – it is not comprehensive advice.

Preparing to work

You should understand your role and responsibilities to your colleagues and the general public. Within the workplace, each member of your organisation is responsible for the safety of each other.

Your employer should provide a notice board showing the location of fire exits, first aid facilities, toilets and washrooms. There should also be a chart to show who is a First Aider and what the procedure is in an emergency.

Take the time to learn this information, in an emergency your swift actions could help to prevent serious injury or even save a life.

Your responsibility

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has defined the responsibility of the professional driver as:

“You are responsible for your vehicle on the road. This means you must be sure of the safety and roadworthiness of both the tractor unit and the trailer.”

This definition includes the safe loading and unloading of goods as well as the safety of the goods whilst in transit. At all times of your working period you are responsible for the safety of others around your vehicle. This is particularly important when delivering close to the general public and in urban areas and also for your customer.

Remember: to follow ‘on-site’ health and safety rules when operating your vehicle on a customer’s premises.

Your employer’s responsibility

Employers have specific safety responsibilities. By law, employers and duty holders must know what hazards and risks are in their workplaces and take steps to eliminate these risks.

Remember: if you are concerned about an activity or in doubt ask your employer.

Carrying the right information

- make sure that you follow your route plan as described by your transport manager or traffic office - if you have to divert make sure you inform them of any changes
- carry emergency contact details with you in case of an accident or emergency
- carry a simple load plan – this helps you speed up your loading and offloading and may help emergency services in the event of an accident
- make sure you have the appropriate training for the vehicle type and any loading/unloading procedures

- if you carry dangerous goods make sure that the appropriate documentation is kept safely in the cab and that vehicle placards are used where required
- for livestock transport, ensure that you have the appropriate certificate of competence for the welfare of animals during transport.

Managing the risks

Your employer should have in place a process for managing risks. Risks should be managed for each of your tasks over your working period.

Please see below for a brief description of the five steps on how to carry out a risk assessment.

Risk assessment

Step 1 – Look for hazards.

Step 2 – Decide who might be harmed and how.

Step 3 – Evaluate the risks. Decide if further precautions should be taken.

Step 4 – Record your findings.

Step 5 – Review and revise your working practice.

Before driving

Driving a Heavy Goods Vehicle is a profession. You will have passed a stringent driving test and have earned the right to operate a very large and potentially dangerous vehicle on the public road.

Your own safety is paramount, both as a driver and while loading and unloading the vehicle. In particular, your safety is most at risk when you are working around the vehicle. There are many factors that can affect your ability to perceive hazards.

Tiredness

Professional driving can be hard work. If you start to feel sleepy while driving, find a safe place to stop and get some rest. One of the largest causes of accidents whilst driving is driver tiredness.

Your reaction times and your hazard perception will get worse the more tired you are. During the early morning (midnight-6.00am) and early afternoon (2.00pm-4.00pm) the body clock 'dips', meaning you are more likely to be tired at these times of day.

Sleep apnoea is a problem affecting some drivers. It is a condition where the sufferer stops breathing during sleep, and can often lead to fatigue. It is commonest in middle-aged men. It is believed to be linked to being overweight. Should you be concerned about fatigue or sleep apnoea, consult your medical doctor. To help avoid tiredness:

- plan adequate rest breaks
- try not to become anxious in heavy traffic or whilst navigating to a new destination
- after periods of manual labour (loading/ unloading) make sure you rest and recover before beginning to drive again
- if you are concerned about being tired find a safe place to park and take a break – fresh air alone will not wake you up
- if you feel sleepy at any stage when driving, as a temporary measure, stop and have a strong caffeine drink and a 15-minute nap while you wait for the caffeine to take effect

Food and nutrition

Health is vitally important to the professional driver's job. Long hours at the wheel followed by periods of manual labour while loading and unloading can be very taxing on your body and your concentration levels. Consider your diet and the amount of exercise you get during your working week. A healthy body really does contribute to having a healthy mind and will help you to stay alert for longer, be fitter in daily life and be a safer driver.

Personal health

Please try to:

- exercise daily to help stimulate oxygen levels in your body
- not to eat very large meals before driving, this can make you feel tired
- balance your diet to ensure that you get vitamins from fruit and vegetables
- don't be afraid of seeking medical advice if you are at all concerned about your health

Drug and alcohol abuse

Any quantity of alcohol will affect your ability to drive. There is no foolproof way of drinking and staying under the legal limit, or of knowing how much an individual person can drink and still drive safely. Your age, weight, what you've eaten and stress levels can all affect the level of alcohol in your body.

Certain illegal drugs may increase your confidence and reduce your perception of risks, so that you feel capable to drive, others may affect your coordination or slow your reaction times.

Be mindful of prescribed medicines, and whether they could impair your ability to drive. Some medicines can also react with alcohol, and magnify the effects.

Please remember:

- **do not** drink alcohol and drive as it will seriously affect your judgment and abilities
- you **must not** drive under the influence of drugs or certain medicines. Check the instructions or ask your medical doctor or pharmacist
- take responsibility for others: never buy an alcoholic drink for someone who is driving
- tell your employer immediately (and in confidence) if you catch a colleague drink-driving, or know a colleague who is taking drugs, for their own safety and the safety of others
- young male drivers are the worst offenders for drink driving

Safety behind the wheel

Safe driving should be practised at all times when you are at the wheel. The size and weight of your vehicle represents a considerable danger to other road users. You should also maintain safe working practice whilst inside the cab. Follow the information in this section to see how you can make your job and working environment safer.

In-cab safety

Items such as CD cases, kit bags, flasks, lunch boxes and other objects must be securely stowed in your cab.

Loose items could get lodged under your brake, clutch or accelerator pedals and cause loss of control of the vehicle. In the event of an accident, or roll over, loose objects inside the cab can be thrown about violently, potentially causing the driver serious injury.

If you have a fire extinguisher inside the cab, it should be mounted securely to a bulkhead using an appropriate bracket. Make sure you know how to operate it and on what type of fire you can use it.

- don't leave objects lying on the dashboard, gearbox cover or on the bunk
- always stow away your personal gear in lockers
- make sure any in-cab communication or navigation device is securely attached to an appropriate bracket
- always wear your seatbelt when driving
- it is also illegal to smoke in the workplace, this includes the cab of your vehicle whether you own it or not

Blind spot awareness

Be aware that other road users such as motorcyclists, cyclists and pedestrians can disappear from view along the side of your vehicle. Clean windows and mirrors are vital to the professional driver. They should remain free of obstruction and should be adjusted appropriately for your driving position, particularly in bad weather. Please ensure:

- prior to starting your journey make sure all mirrors are adjusted appropriately for your seating position
- exercise extreme caution when reversing and even if your vehicle is fitted with reversing alarms or you have rear view cameras do not assume that is automatically safe to reverse
- make sure the windows and mirrors are clean
- use a 'Fresnel lens' or CCTV to give you a better view of your blind spots to the side and rear of your vehicle

Mobile phones and other distractions

Mobile phones are one of the biggest distractions for the professional driver. It is illegal to drive a vehicle while using a hand-held mobile phone or a similar device. Their use can result in a fine or prosecution and, if found to be the cause of a road traffic accident, possible imprisonment.

Laptops, PDAs and smart phones all provide today's driver with other means of communication and can also be a distraction. If you use these items make sure they are disabled whilst you are driving.

Please remember:

- do not use your mobile phone or any other means of communicating whilst driving
- talking on a mobile phone whilst driving affects your concentration and ability to react to dangerous situations
- if you need to use a communication device find a safe place to stop first
- when listening to the radio keep the volume at a level where you can hear your own vehicle's engine and traffic around you

Safety around the vehicle

Working in a yard and outside your vehicle can be the most dangerous times of your working period. As a driver, you are most vulnerable when on your feet around your own and other vehicles. When choosing where to stop to make deliveries, choose locations sensibly, away from road junctions or potentially dangerous spots. You may be increasing the chance of an accident for other road users without knowing.

When loading and unloading the vehicle you may be required to climb onto and operate onboard systems. This also presents great danger to you and others around your vehicle. The following information will help you protect yourself from potential hazards.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

For all activities outside your vehicle, wearing the appropriate clothing is very important. PPE not only serves to protect you in the event of an accident, but high visibility clothing also helps to prevent accidents through making you more visible to other drivers and machine.

Remember: make sure you know when to wear PPE and why it is needed – always store your PPE appropriately and if your PPE is damaged, replace it immediately.

It is important to:

- wear high visibility clothing – so others can see you
- wear protective footwear to protect your feet from moving parts, wheels, falling objects and spills
- wear gloves for dirty or hazardous work – to avoid skin irritation
- wear a hardhat to protect against falling objects and whilst working under objects
- use the appropriate PPE specifically required for any dangerous or hazardous material

Remember: repeated exposure to certain chemicals can be hazardous to your health.

Carrying dangerous goods

There is a wide range of products classified as 'dangerous goods'. You can usually recognise them by hazard warning diamonds on packages, drums and tanks, as well as orange placards on vehicles. Such goods are subject to special packaging, marking, loading, safety equipment and documentation requirements.

You must have received relevant training and instruction to deal with dangerous goods - many loads require you to hold an ADR vocational training certificate and some are subject to special security arrangements.

Please remember to:

- always wear the appropriate PPE when handling the substance carried
- ensure you have the correct training and qualifications to carry each type of product
- ensure that your vehicle has the correct placards, and that you carry the appropriate documentation for the products, securely in your cab
- carry with you appropriate First Aid, Spill kits and the correct Fire Extinguishers for the product carried

Remember: if in doubt about a load, ask your manager for advice.

Noise

Modern vehicle mounted machinery used on waste removal trucks, onboard cranes and cement mixers will have its sound output stamped on the bodywork of the vehicle.

Exposure to loud noise can cause tinnitus (ringing or buzzing in the ear), hearing loss and can lead to permanent damage. Please:

- make sure you use hearing protection when necessary
- limit your exposure to very loud sounds
- consider where you have parked the vehicle and the effect on the surrounding environment
- if required ask your employer to provide adequate hearing protection

Remember: to keep earplugs or defenders in the cab, ready to use, even for short periods of noise exposure.

Load safety

You are responsible for the vehicle throughout its journey. Prior to setting off, you should inspect your vehicle for all aspects of load safety. Use straps, load retention nets, safety bars or chains to prevent your load shifting on the move.

Make sure tail-lifts are used on level ground and when in use the platform doesn't come to rest halfway on and halfway off a kerb. If side guards are fitted on the tail-lift, use them.

Where possible you should check your vehicle periodically during your journey. If your load has special requirements such as livestock or temperature sensitive goods, these should be monitored accordingly.

Remember: to replace any load retention straps, bars, chains or safety nets when they become damaged or frayed.

Always remember:

- where possible your vehicle should be filled tight to the front end or headboard to prevent loads slipping and falling
- the load should be fastened and secured to the bulkhead or floor – curtains are for weather protection only
- check that all hatches, valves, curtains and doors are closed
- make sure any onboard systems (tail lifts, pumps) are disabled and stowed away appropriately
- place appropriate warning placards on protruding or oversized loads
- be mindful of product movement if transporting bulk liquids

Remember: you might not be the only person who has to operate your vehicle – don't be the cause of someone else's accident!

Slips and trips

Drivers working outside the vehicle are exposed to slipping and tripping dangers every time they cross the catwalk behind the cab or walk across a trailer bed. Diesel spills, oil and even wet weather can make working on the outside of the vehicle much more dangerous for the driver.

Vehicles should be fitted with handrails or steps to help you get in or out of the load area or cab. Please use these steps; they are there for a purpose. Many injuries occur by drivers merely jumping from the vehicle and landing badly.

Always:

- wear approved PPE - non-slip safety footwear
- inspect your catwalk and vehicle body before you have to climb or walk on them
- use the appropriate handrails to help climb onto or out of the vehicle
- clean off all debris from ladders and vehicle bodies before attempting to load or unload the vehicle

Working at height

Many load and vehicle types may require you to climb onto the load space, such as tankers, tippers, car transporters, double-deck trailers or flatbeds. Others such as onboard cranes and man-lifts actually require you to operate hydraulic equipment from a high-level platform. Tankers often have collapsible or fixed handrails that you should always use if working on the top of the vehicle.

Please remember to:

- make sure you are wearing the appropriate PPE and if necessary a safety harness/full restrictor
- ensure you have been shown how to safely climb the vehicle – keep three points of contact at all times
- make sure you have the correct training to operate the onboard systems
- if operating systems such as pumps or cranes make sure you have marked out a safe working zone around the vehicle

Working around plant and other machinery

If your job requires you to operate around other plant and machinery, make sure you are aware of how these vehicles work. Always follow site health and safety rules. Be aware of their movement or likely movements. Watch out for construction crews, tradesmen and members of the public who may be working on the ground and might not be able to hear your vehicle moving.

When operating with oversize or protruding loads ask for help when negotiating tight or confined spaces.

Please ensure that you:

- make sure you have read and understand the site safety rules
- listen to instructions from site foremen or supervisors
- if you are operating tipping bodies ensure they are on level ground before raising - the vehicle can become unstable and turn over at relatively small angles
- be aware of other vehicles and machinery that may be working around you
- obey all onsite rules regarding speed limits and other regulations which may be different from public roads
- **if in doubt ask!**



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