



Health and safety in refuse driving operations

This briefing provides an update on health and safety in refuse driving operations together with 4 case studies from local authorities throughout the UK.

Key issues

- Latest health and safety statistics for vehicle related incidents
- Helpful links to guidance on safety in driving operations
- Case studies from 4 local authorities throughout the UK; Bath and North East Somerset Council, Aylesbury Vale District Council and South Northamptonshire Council, Newport City Council and Angus Council

1. Introduction

In 2003, the Northamptonshire Local Authority Safety Adviser Group produced a guidance note, *'Management of Refuse Driving Operations'*, to establish a common standard within each of the Local Authorities within Northamptonshire for managing refuse driving operations in order to reduce the possible risk of injury to their employees and members of the public. APSE supported the initiative and promoted the guidance amongst its member authorities. In 2006, a 'good practice' document was produced, *'Waste and recycling vehicles in street collection'* in consultation with the Waste Industry Safety and Health Forum (WISH) and the Health and Safety Executive based on a guidance note produced by the Northamptonshire Local Authority Safety Advisors Group and this can be accessed by clicking [here](#).

In 2005 further work was done by the Local Authority Waste Management Occupational Health and Safety (LAWS) Forum reviewing the Management of Refuse Driving Operations to include loading activities that can be obtained via APSE (click [here](#)).

This was brought to life with the production of the induction training pack / DVD Working Safely in Refuse & Recycling by Aylesbury Vale District Council and South Northamptonshire Council that can be accessed by clicking [here](#).

5 years on from the publication of *'Waste and recycling vehicles in street collection'*, APSE has brought together, in this briefing paper, 4 case studies from local authorities throughout the UK describing progress made in managing health and safety in refuse driving operations.

It is also important to note that there have been further developments in guidance over recent years. In 2009, the HSE and WISH produced good practice guidance on 'Safe waste and recycling collection services' which is available by clicking [here](#). In addition, the LAWS Forum produced a workable methodology of this guidance, called 'Completion of Round Risk Assessments'. Details on LAWS and the methodology can be obtained via APSE (click [here](#)).

2. Why is this important?

Waste management and recycling is a priority industry sector for health and safety. Accident rates for waste and recycling (2010/11) remain significantly higher than for all other industries – 4.5 times higher for all injuries and 14.2 times higher for fatal accidents. The number of vehicle related incidents to employees over the period 2004/05 to 2010/11 was as follows:

Reported accidents to employees – hit by moving vehicle

	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
Fatal injuries	3	6	3	4	4	1	4
Major injuries	27	29	32	38	34	29	39
Over 3 day injuries	49	40	36	76	71	49	57
All injuries	79	75	71	118	109	79	100

Over the same period of time, there was an average of 2 fatal accidents and 30 non-fatal accidents in each year to members of the public, most of which relate to RCV or LGV collection vehicle activities. In terms of trends, over the past 4 years the number of vehicle related incidents to employees and incidents to members of the public has been relatively flat-line.

3. Case studies

a. Bath and North East Somerset Council – ROSPA award winners 2011

Bath and North East Somerset Council is a Unitary Authority covering some 570 sq Km (220sq miles) 2/3rds of which is in the green belt. They have 76,250 households and a population of almost 180,000, over half of which live in the city of Bath. As a unitary authority they are responsible for both waste collection and waste disposal functions. They deliver weekly residual waste collection, fortnightly garden waste, weekly clinical waste, trade waste collection, trade paper and card recycling service and bulky waste collections in-house. They have a contractor for weekly kerbside sort and food waste recycling service, mini-recycling centres, and a bring bank service.

Health and safety (H&S) is a priority within the waste service. Their focus on H&S in waste collections started with the national HSE initiative in 2007. The HSE initiative was brought about by the high accident rate – (four times the national average) and fatality incidents (ten times the national average) – in the UK waste industry. In 2008 a fatality occurred in their collection operations and their focus was immediately escalated. No formal action was taken against the Council but a thorough review was undertaken of all aspects of H&S within the service and improvements made as a result.

One key issue coming out of the investigation into the fatality was a need to evidence all the work that takes place on a day to day basis in relation to H&S. Improving their

record keeping of meetings, briefings, training, supervision, monitoring and H&S related conversations with staff, to give a robust evidence trail was of key concern.

The priority throughout the service is to communicate, engage and train staff in H&S issues. Through the improvements made, the Council have gone on to win a ROSPA Health and Safety Award in recognition of their systems.

Induction:

Before any member of staff (including agency) is allowed out to work they are given a comprehensive induction. This includes the Issue of all Safe Systems of Work (SSOW) which are run through by a PowerPoint presentation and an interactive DVD (Environmental Services Association ESA). Each driver has a driving assessment by a ROSPA qualified assessor (they have several drivers trained as in-house assessors). They carry out comprehensive licence checks including telephoning the DVLA to check information and all drivers are required to complete a health self-declaration.

All staff are given a "*Health Safety and Wellbeing at work*" pocket book which is a comprehensive guide to their specific area of work and includes information on their own role and responsibilities. This is run through by a supervisor and staff must sign to say that they have received and understood the content.

Specifically for drivers:

Drivers:

- Are given a visual acuity test every 2 years, against specific driver categories (includes long term agency staff as well).
- Have their licences checked every 4 months.
- Given a drivers handbook produced by their Transport Services department. This details their responsibilities whilst driving for the Council.
- Given an annual driving assessment by a qualified assessor.
- Attend a quarterly forum with Transport Services representatives.
- Given a daily route specific folder which includes any specific instructions for that day, all SSOW and a driver check list. The driver must complete a vehicle check list every day before leaving the depot. All defects must be recorded on this sheet for attention by managers.
- Made aware that every reversing manoeuvre *must* employ a reversing assistant where safe to do so and failure to comply with this SSOW is treated very seriously.

Vehicles:

A new collection fleet was procured in 2010 with enhanced safety features. All new vehicles now have 4 way cameras, low entry cabs, narrow track, two way radios and tracking devices. They have moved back to a radio system away from mobile phones, which enables them to communicate to several vehicles at the same time, and to send texts if the driver is unable to respond. It also ensures that drivers are not tempted to answer mobile phones whilst driving. The radios are linked to the real time tracking information so that call centre staff, and supervisors can see where the trucks are at any given moment so that they can more efficiently respond to customer calls, and investigate any productivity issues.

The 4 way cameras have proved invaluable in defending insurance claims. They have been able to successfully defend over 13 insurance claims, and have identified poor practice, disciplinary issues and training needs as a result of the cameras.

Their vehicle maintenance contractor is now based in our depot so they have a much quicker turnaround on repairs and servicing.

Route specific risk assessments

A complete review of routes was undertaken in 2009 when new software was procured so that all routes could be digitised. This software gives them the ability to put all Health and Safety information on the routes as a textual link to a map. They are now developing this software into a satellite navigation system so that health and safety information will be given in real time to the crew.

The route specific risk assessments are an ongoing process. Each route is run through in detail with individual drivers to make sure everything is captured. A specific sized vehicle is allocated to each property, and issues such as double or single sided collections, timings of collections near schools and on main routes, and particular reversing manoeuvres are identified.

The software drives the route in a particular order to ensure the route is optimised in terms of mileage efficiencies. The satellite navigation solution is being developed to ensure drivers follow the route in the most efficient way.

Supervision and Monitoring

All staff are required to clock in and out using an electronic hand reader machine, so that attendance is recorded and management know who is in work at any point in time. Task and finish has been abolished; collectors work from 7am to 3pm Monday-Thursday, and 7am -2.30pm on a Friday including bank holidays (excluding Christmas day, Boxing day and New Years day). Any spare time at the end of the day is generally used for briefings, 1-1 training and performance reviews. Only when all of that day's work is completed in its entirety may the workforce leave.

Every round is scheduled for formal random supervisory inspection over a 2 week period (in addition to informal monitoring carried out by supervisors as they travel around the collection zones). This formal monitor is recorded and the results stored electronically. The Manager signs off any further actions required, but on the job training is given at the time of monitoring to correct any issues there and then.

They have now developed an electronic monitoring system for supervisors using smartphone technology to reduce admin and automatically flag repeat issues promptly to management. In addition, senior management with the H&S advisor carry out covert monitoring every 3 months and they do joint monitoring of refuse and recycling crews with their contractor every 2 months. They carry out random gate checks periodically to check for issues such as wearing of seatbelts and correct use of beacons when leaving/entering the depot.

If a member of staff is suspected of taking drugs or alcohol they have access to the BUPA (their occupational health provider) "For Cause" Service. BUPA guarantee to attend site within 1 hour to carry out individual testing.

Accident Reporting

All accidents including vehicle accidents and near misses are recorded on a corporate accident database. All accidents must be reported and investigated within set timescales. These are reported on to senior management monthly and to the Chief Executive annually. Near misses are encouraged to be reported, but this is one area where they need to do more to encourage hazard spotting.

Communications

This includes:

- Monthly team briefings for all staff; recording attendance, questions and answers
- Regular toolbox talks
- Briefing notes stapled to payslips

- Staff are required to sign for SSOW
- Site diaries are now held with records of conversations (demonstrates when individual staff have been spoken to without the need for more formal records).
- Supervisors have monthly 1-1's with their manager.
- All staff have annual PDR's (performance development reviews).

They carried out a lean review into the way that they deal with missed bins last year. As a result of this, customer calls relating specifically to missed bins have been taken away from their corporate call centre. They are now routed back to the depot where the dedicated members of staff can more proactively deal with problems and work with staff directly to resolve issues, contacting crews on the radio or working with supervisors face to face. This has resulted in a significant reduction in repeat misses. It has reduced the number of customer complaints dramatically and has allowed them to give more accurate information and a quicker response to those customers who have genuine cause for complaint.

Training and Development

This includes:

- All individual training is recorded on a database on site, which can run reports to show when refresher training or updates are due for individuals They also include all issues of SSOW and briefings for individuals on this database.
- All staff are offered Skills for Life training which covers basic English, maths and computer skills, and can lead to formal qualifications.
- All collections staff have had basic first aid training, manual handling and reversing assistant/banksman training.
- All Supervisors and managers have the IOSH managing safely certificate and the Collections Manager and Health and Safety Champion have the NEBOSH General Certificate.
- They have been developing an in-house leadership academy for Managers and Supervisors to give 1-1 coaching and personal development, and a Team Leader development programme for all drivers to enhance their skills beyond their driving ability. They are about to begin an NVQ in Team Leadership to further develop professional qualifications for front line staff.
- They are making the most of the compulsory requirement to carry out Driver CPC by tailoring a course specifically to develop their staff as professional drivers.

Future Developments

Financial pressures and the need to treat waste in different ways will necessitate changes to their collection and operational services. Workforce development planning and health and safety will remain at the forefront of their thinking in reconfiguring the services they provide, whilst striving to maintain high levels of customer service.

b. Aylesbury Vale District Council and South Northamptonshire Council – DVD on supervising and monitoring in refuse and recycling

Aylesbury Vale District Council and South Northamptonshire Council have in-house refuse and recycling services. These authorities have produced a DVD called '*Supervising and monitoring in Refuse and Recycling*', which uses various scenarios and trainers notes to assist in developing the right skills and competence for supervisors. It is aimed at supervisors, team leaders and anyone with responsibilities for monitoring and auditing in refuse and recycling collection. The DVD includes the following sections; legislation, responsibilities, hazards and risks, supervision, monitoring, accidents, first aid and

health, and accident investigation, together with four practical monitoring exercises. For more information please click on the following [link](#).

c. Newport City Council – Induction training programme

In Newport City Council, all drivers, whether full time, new starters or agency must go through an induction/training programme that will last a minimum of two weeks and up to a maximum of three weeks (depending on the individual). Details of this programme are included below.

What can drivers expect during this period?

All new driver operatives will be requested to arrive at the Refuse Supervisor office on his/her first start day at 07.15am after the fleet has left the Depot. This is to afford more time to them without the distractions of dealing with others. Drivers **must** bring both parts of their driving licence and toe protected safety boots/shoes, failure to do so will result in them being sent home. This information is given out via Agencies and on acceptance of new posts internally. Drivers will be introduced to all four supervisors on arrival explaining who is primarily responsible for what during the time before the fleet exit the Depot to start their days work. During this time they will also be instructed on the Smoking, Alcohol and Drug policy and the Depot Fire procedure as well as being issued with any relevant personal protective equipment (PPE).

Details of the drivers licence will then be checked and recorded to ensure they have the correct licence to drive Refuse related vehicles. This will be followed by an eye sight test whereby they will have to read a number plate from a distance of 20.5 metres. Incorrect licence details or the inability to read the number plate will result in the driver being sent home.

Drivers will then be instructed on the procedures to follow each morning with the aim of finding out their task for that day, signing in for work, any relevant worksheets, PPE that will be required and have to sign for as well as obtaining a vehicle key, vehicle defect book and a driver hours recording book. Drivers will be shown how to fill in both the vehicle defect book and their own personal driver hours recording book during this time. A secure locker will then be allocated to the new driver with a key that must also be signed for.

On completion of this phase they will be given a “*Drivers Safety Handbook*” to keep for their own use during the time with the Refuse Department. It is advised that drivers keep this with them at all times while at work in order to refer back should they ever need reassuring or reminding of any procedure.

Training

All Refuse driver operatives are required to undergo the training programme for a Refuse Loader as well as for the Refuse Driver. During this period they will have demonstrations, be instructed on, have explained and be able to practice all aspects of the training. The council will complete one section at a time during the training and at the end of each section they will be encouraged to ask questions or go over any aspects of it again should they wish. Before moving on to the next training procedure drivers will be required to sign to say that they have understood and are competent on the procedure just finished. These signed procedures, once completed, will be kept in a personal file at the Managers office for future reference.

Refuse vehicles

Drivers will undergo training over a number of sections relating to the refuse vehicle. Each section must be completed before moving on to the next;

a. Entering/exiting refuse vehicles

- b. Vehicle cabin controls
- c. Gross weights
- d. Safe vehicle checks
- e. Vehicle body drainage pipe
- f. Emergency stop buttons
- g. Bin hoist – safe use
- h. Driving refuse vehicles
- i. Reversing safely - driver

Assessment drive

Once all of the above has been covered and the supervisor and new driver is happy with what has been shown and practised, it is then that the driver will be taken out on an assessment drive. The assessor is a registered ROSPA Gold Grade advanced driver and drive assessor of Refuse Vehicles. The drive assessment route covers city, motorway and rural driving over all ranges of speed limits and will last a minimum of 60 minutes. Before the drive starts the assessor will explain the procedure involved before, during and after the drive. An official drive assessment sheet is used for this process and they assess the drive/driver as either a low, medium or high risk. High risk results in the driver having a second drive by another ROSPA graded assessor and should he/she also come back with a high risk, then unfortunately we will not use him/her.

If successful with the assessment drive the driver will then undergo more sections of training to complete the driver related procedures. These are as follows;

- a. RTC, road traffic collision – recording/reporting
- b. Personal accident, incident, near miss reporting
- c. Highway – safe working on/near
- d. Site rules/regulations
- e. Severe weather conditions – driving
- f. Washing refuse vehicles
- g. Pressure washer – safe use
- h. Fuelling refuse vehicles

Refuse loading

Drivers will undergo training over a number of sections relating to the refuse collecting/loading. Each section must be completed before moving on to the next;

- a. Manual handling
- b. P.P.E.
- c. Refuse collection – safe collections
- d. Reversing safely – loader
- e. Public places – safe working
- f. Refuse sacks – safe handling
- g. Severe weather conditions – outdoor working
- h. Slips, trips and falls – prevention

This induction will take a minimum of 2 days to a maximum of 4 days before the new driver is taken out with a nominated full experienced crew. Under no circumstance is a new driver to be put out as “part of a crew” during the 3 week training period. This training will cover domestic, recycling and trade collections. Monitors of this new driver must take place on a daily basis during the 3 week training period with regular feedback given to the training supervisor who will then decide either during or at the end of the period as to whether or not the operative is confident/competent enough to be allowed out as “part of a crew”.

In order to ensure that safe working practices are being followed they carry out random vehicle spot checks and operational monitors. They aim to spot check every vehicle weekly and look to monitor the operations of every employee over a two week period. These are recorded and displayed so to keep information on show as to who or what vehicle is in need of doing and also, to show any failings over any period of time by either vehicle, driver or loader.

d. Angus Council –Training course for waste operatives

Angus Council have developed a Training Course for waste operatives, which includes sessions on the role of a Reversing Assistant as well as other subjects such as risk assessments, manual handling, customer care, tackling drug litter, LEAMS reports and cleanliness grading. The training course consists of a lesson via a PowerPoint slide show, a practical assessment along with a written exam. Following completion of the course, staff receive a “certificate of competence”.

The training on the role of a Reversing Assistant has the following objectives:

- To know and understand the roles of the Vehicle Driver and the Reversing Assistant whilst carrying out a reversing manoeuvre.
- Understand the key issues whilst reversing and manoeuvring
- Identify the main areas of danger for reversing vehicles
- Demonstrate a recommended code of signals and a reversing procedure.

The slide show which the council has developed includes the following:

- The hazards and who is at risk
- Why it is important
- The drivers role whilst reversing
- Reversing assistant responsibilities
- Safety points and hand signals

4. APSE comment

Health and Safety is vitally important to safeguard the health of both members of staff and members of the public and this will topic feature at APSE advisory groups and events during 2012. If any APSE member authorities would like contact details for any of the case studies above, please email djohns@apse.org.uk APSE also have pulled together examples of risk assessments from various local authorities and if you would like copies of these, please also email djohns@apse.org.uk

APSE training has a range of development events to help local authorities in this sector:

Click [here](#) for StreetScene supervisory skills

And [here](#) for Health and Safety in Waste and Environmental Services

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