

Systemic Safety Alert
Risk Control of Workplace Vehicles and Mobile Plant

Major Systemic Safety Problems

Vehicles and mobile plant are commonly used in workplaces. Serious accidents, particularly persons being knocked down by the moving vehicles/plant are prone to happen in the absence of a safe system of work and tight on-site monitoring and control. Major systemic safety problems include: -

- Failure to conduct task-specific risk assessments and to formulate a safe system of work in areas involving the traffic or operation of workplace vehicles or mobile plant;
- Lack of effective monitoring and control system to prevent uncontrolled entry of persons into the operating zone with moving workplace vehicles or mobile plant;
- Poor traffic management with inadequate control measures to prevent persons from being struck by moving workplace vehicles or mobile plant;
- Slack monitoring and control on the use of workplace vehicles or mobile plant (e.g. leaving a vehicle or mobile plant unattended with its engine switching on, improper keeping of the ignition key of a workplace vehicle or mobile plant such that person(s) without proper training and qualification are able to get the key easily to operate the workplace vehicle or mobile plant, etc.);
- Ineffective hazard communication through safety signs, safety instruction and task-specific training to relevant personnel, such as drivers, operators and workers on the traffic routes and rules on the site; and
- Lack of proper repair or preventive maintenance for the workplace vehicles and mobile plant, and their auxiliary devices to ensure that they are properly maintained and in safe and serviceable conditions.

Accident Prevention Measures

RSOs should advise their clients/employers to: -

- adopt task-specific approach in conducting risk assessments and formulating safe system of work and devise appropriate task-specific control measures;
- properly segregate and clearly demarcate the operating zone of moving workplace vehicles or mobile plant by physical barriers, signs and notices; and, as far as practicable, avoid persons entering or working inside the zone. If persons entering or working inside the zone is unavoidable, then put in place

stringent monitoring and control (e.g. by adopting a permit-to-enter/work system with necessary control measures);

- provide appropriate facilities (e.g. pedestrian-only routes, clear demarcation of pedestrian routes by physical barriers, proper pedestrian crossing points, etc.) to facilitate safe movement of personnel inside the zone;
- impose speed limits on traffic routes through erecting speed limit signs, road humps or other similar devices;
- install reversing video devices and rear view mirrors on workplace vehicles and mobile plant to eliminate blind spots of drivers/operators. This may also be complemented by other reversing safety devices such as parking sensor, and reversing alarm and warning light. Besides, as far as practicable, a trained and competent signaller should be provided to assist in the reversing of workplace vehicles and mobile plant;
- put in place stringent monitoring and control on use of workplace vehicles and mobile plant to prevent unauthorized operation. Measures include but not limited to affixing the list of authorized drivers and operators to workplace vehicles and mobile plant, assigning designated person(s) to properly keep ignition keys of the workplace vehicles and mobile plant, etc.;
- provide job-specific induction and refresher training to drivers and operators for safe operation of workplace vehicles and mobile plant, and provide briefing for relevant personnel, such as drivers, operators and workers on the traffic routes and rules on site (e.g. speed limits, wearing of reflective vests within or in the vicinity of the operating zone, etc.);
- implement proper repair and preventive maintenance for the workplace vehicles/mobile plant and their auxiliaries devices (e.g. audible and visible warning alarm, CCTV monitoring system etc.);
- exercise stringent supervision to ensure the effective implementation of risk control measures in workplaces; and
- regularly review the system of work in workplace traffic management to ensure the risk control measures continue to be effective.

RSAs should take into account these systemic issues in executing safety audit functions.

Labour Department
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