

Materials Handling Guidance Note No.1

MECHANISED UNLOADING OF WOOD FIBRE PRODUCTS FROM CURTAIN-SIDED VEHICLES

Introduction

This Guidance Note has been produced jointly by the United Kingdom Forest Products Association (UKFPA), the Wood Panel Industry Federation (WPIF) and the Wood Recyclers' Association (WRA). It provides practical guidance on the unloading of wood fibre products, including sawmill chips, sawdust, bark and recycled wood fibre, from specialised curtain-sided vehicles, which may also be known as chipliners.

The transport of sawmill products and other bulk wood fibre products in specialised curtain-sided vehicles is one of the standard methods used within the UK forest products industry, where there is more than twenty years experience of their use. Products of this type may also be transported in walking floor-equipped vehicles and tippers, although chipliners provide greater flexibility in use. Bulk materials of this type are unloaded from curtain-sided vehicles by a method known as 'push-through', which utilises a wheeled shovel to push the product through and out of the trailer.



On completion of mechanised unloading, it is necessary to sweep down the trailer to remove any remaining product. As this operation constitutes work at height, this is also addressed in this guidance.

The information provided in this Guidance Note must be supplemented by site specific risk assessment, operating instructions and site safety procedures.

The use of chipliners is currently being considered by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and this guidance is provided in the interim.

Recommendations for best practice

- Risk assessment: The unloading of wood fibre products from curtain-sided vehicles must be the subject of risk assessment by a competent person. Attention must be paid to workplace transport safety and in particular, pedestrian/vehicle separation.
- Site specific operating procedures and site safety instructions must be adhered to at all times. Instructions/directions issued by site personnel must be complied with at all times.
- Personal protective equipment (PPE): All personnel involved in these operations must use appropriate PPE, which must be maintained in good condition. Where dust hazard is present, the use of CE-marked disposable dust masks, complying with EN149 FFP2, is recommended as a minimum.
- Communication: Effective communication and visual contact must be maintained between the lorry driver and shovel operator during unloading operations. If the shovel operator cannot see the lorry driver, operations should stop until contact has been restored and acknowledged.
- Opening the rear doors and curtains: Although the product becomes compacted whilst in transit, caution must be exercised when opening the curtains and doors, as a small amount of loose material may fall from the vehicle. Operators should ensure that the curtains are kept between them and the load when they are opened.
- Moving from unloading area: During unloading operations, wood material may accumulate around the wheels of the trailer and/or tractor unit, which may impede its movement. In such cases, it may be necessary to use the wheeled shovel to tow the vehicle clear of the wood material. In some instances, the wheeled shovel may be used to push the vehicle clear of the wood material, although towing is generally preferred.

- When towing or pushing is employed, the lorry driver and shovel operator shall be aware of relevant site operating and safety procedures for this operation and shall ensure that effective communication and visual contact is maintained between them at all times.
- Sweeping-down trailers: On completion of the mechanised unloading operations, it is necessary for drivers to sweep down the trailer. This constitutes work at height and appropriate precautions shall be taken to ensure the safety of persons working at height. Work at height refers to work in any place where a person could fall a distance liable to result in personal injury.



The trailer should not be entered until the mechanised unloading operations have been completed. Persons should never use parts of the vehicle not designed for use as handholds or footholds to gain access to any part of the vehicle. When accessing the trailer for sweeping purposes, handholds, footholds, handrails, as fitted, must be used. Steps and handholds must be at a suitable height and spacing. They should also be of appropriate strength, be secure and in serviceable condition. Appropriate footwear must be worn. Sweeping should be carried out from the centre-line of the trailer, thereby avoiding persons working near the edges of the trailer. Persons walking on the trailer floor should always do so carefully, facing the direction of travel and keeping their feet well apart and free to move. Personnel should not walk backwards and should pay attention to the stability and grip of the surfaces they are walking on. Persons should not jump down from vehicles.

- Steps and ladders: Where portable steps or ladders are used to access the trailer, these must be of suitable quality and be maintained in serviceable condition. Users should conduct a pre-use visual and functional inspection of the steps/ladder to ensure suitability for use. Users of steps/ladders should ensure three points of hand/foot contact at all times.
- Work equipment: All work equipment must be well maintained and be appropriate for the intended task.
- Lighting: The work area should be adequately lit.

References

- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations.
- Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations.
- Work at Height Regulations.

Further information

- Five steps to risk assessment. HSE, INDG163(rev2).
- Preventing falls from vehicles. HSE, INDG413.
- Workplace transport safety: Guidance for employers. HSE, INDG242.
- Workplace transport safety - An overview. HSE, INDG199(rev1).
- Preventing falls from vehicles - Advice for workers. HSE, INDG413.

For further information on this subject, or other health and safety related matters, contact UKFPA, WRA or WPIF. Further information is also available from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), via its website at www.hse.gov.uk or via the HSE Infoline, tel; 0845 345 0055. More specific technical or legal queries should be directed your local office of the Health and Safety Executive.

This Guidance Note includes notes on good practice which are not compulsory, but which you may find helpful in considering what you need to do.

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