

Reversing Safely

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Due to the relatively low impact speed, many people don't regard reversing as a significant hazard, however almost 60% of all commercial vehicle accident claims involve reversing and HGVs lead the way with 19% of these claims, vans 15% and company cars 10%.

However, it's not just damage to vehicles and property that are at risk, people can be injured too. Shockingly, nearly a quarter of all deaths involving vehicles at work occur during reversing.

Even the most proficient drivers need help reversing their vehicles in difficult circumstances. With extra care and attention, we can all help to reduce these stats and here are some of our top tips for safer reversing.

Before you start reversing

- ❖ Walk around the vehicle, look for hazards and check that the route free from obstruction. If it is blocked, can you access by another route?
- ❖ Are other workers and/or pedestrians clear of where you need to be?
- ❖ Complete a ground level and overhead check for any obstructions. Ask yourself "Will my vehicle fit in here?"
- ❖ If you cannot see behind, get down from your cab and check before reversing.
- ❖ Alert other workers and/or pedestrians and put on your hazard warning lights, or sound your horn.
- ❖ What is the distance you're planning to travel when in reverse? Avoid reversing over a long distance if possible.
- ❖ Always be aware of other people, pedestrians and children. Children are unpredictable and unaware of your intentions for moving the vehicle.

When you are reversing

- ❖ Use the help of a trained signaller (a 'banksman'), whose job it is to keep the reversing area free of pedestrians, and to guide drivers. If you need help, it's

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always better to ask than risk having an accident.

- ✦ When using a banksman, make sure you understand their signals before starting the reversing manoeuvre. If you lose sight of him/her, stop immediately.
- ✦ It's much easier to reverse into a gap than out of it into flowing traffic. When delivering, complete your reversing manoeuvre as soon as you arrive at your destination.
- ✦ If there are guidelines on the floor, use them to position your vehicle accurately.
- ✦ Reverse slowly and with caution, minimising the distance. Be prepared to stop instantly.
- ✦ If the view in your mirrors becomes obstructed, or you're unsure of distances, stop, get out of your vehicle and check access before continuing the manoeuvre.
- ✦ Where do reversing accidents happen?

It is important that all drivers exercise greater care when reversing, especially when visiting customer sites and homes. The most places where reversing collisions occur is primarily during collection and delivery (52%), secondly on site (29%), on route (15%) and at the company depot (4%).

Site Safety

In organisations where Health & Safety at work is a priority, you're likely to find some of the following safety provisions in place to help you reverse safely, but you still need to remain alert.

One-way systems that remove the need for reversing

- ✦ Specific routes to minimise the need for reversing where it is unavoidable
- ✦ Fixed mirrors installed to increase visibility, and stops such as barriers or buffers at loading bays
- ✦ Barriers or wheel stops used where vehicles reverse up to structures or edges

Vehicle Safety Devices

- ✦ External side-mounted & rear-view mirrors
- ✦ Refractive lenses fitted to rear-view mirrors or CCTV systems to help drivers see behind the vehicle
- ✦ Reversing alarms fitted – either audible alarms or flashing lights
- ✦ 'Sensing' or 'trip' systems to warn the driver or stop the vehicle when an obstruction is detected close to, or comes into contact with, the vehicle

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