

Safety and health alert

13/98 Farmer crushed by cattle truck

Incident

A retired farmer was fatally crushed between a cattle truck and a loading ramp on a farm near Busselton in July 1998.

A self-employed transport contractor was delivering cattle to the farm when a steer became trapped between the truck and the loading ramp. The driver requested the farmer to close the sliding gate at the rear of the crate on the truck while he drove forward and released the trapped animal.

The driver drove the truck forward, the steer dropped to the ground, and the farmer stepped behind the truck and closed the sliding gate. The driver immediately reversed the truck, crushing the farmer against the loading ramp.

Factors

1. Buffers on the truck and ramp prevented close alignment between the crate on the truck and the ramp railings. The resulting gap allowed a steer to become trapped, preventing further unloading.
2. The solid sides of the crate prevented the driver from seeing pedestrians at the rear of the truck. Many trucks are now fitted with solid sided crates to reduce injury and damage to livestock. The driver did not ensure the farmer was clear of the truck before reversing.
3. The truck was not fitted with an audible alarm to alert pedestrians that the truck was reversing.

Recommendations

1. Rail extensions (commonly known as "wings") should be added to unloading ramps where a gap between the truck body and the ramp railings could allow stock to become trapped - for instance, the gap should be no more than 300mm for cattle.
2. Truck drivers working on their own must take due care reversing and manoeuvring, especially when the truck body restricts their field of vision.
3. Trucks operating in pedestrian areas should be fitted with audible alarms activated by the reverse gear. These alarms alert people that the truck is reversing, including those outside the driver's field of vision. A number of serious accidents have been caused by moving vehicles trapping persons against buildings or structures.
4. Drivers climbing the side of the truck body require suitable access to prevent falls. A permanent ladder should be used to safely access the top of the truck body from ground level.



Further Information

Further information can be obtained from the WorkSafe internet site www.worksafe.wa.gov.au, or by contacting customer service on 1300 307 877 or email: safety@docep.wa.gov.au.

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