

IN-CAB SAFETY – SPECIFIC VEHICLE CONSIDERATIONS



VIBRATION AND CABIN SEATING

The driver of a vehicle absorbs vibration from the seat pan, seat back, pedals, wheels etc. The level of vibration depends on the engine, load and road surface.

Exposure to vibrations can create health risks, such as elevated heart rate, blood pressure and respiration, or difficulty in reading instruments.

It also contributes to what is commonly known as "Occupational Over-use Syndrome" (OOS) and lower back pain. Prolonged exposure can also build up fatigue.

FACTORS TO CONSIDER INCLUDE:

- the seating and cabin suspension
- the axle suspension
- the effects of power steering
- pedal positioning and the force required to use them
- the suitability of tyres
- the type and nature of the road surface.

SEATING AND CONTROLS

The positioning and design of seating and controls can create problems for the driver. These problems are likely to build up over time due to repeated exposure.

Problems associated with seating and controls include:

- spinal stress from lack of back support
- postural problems and fatigue
- shoulder and back strain from reaching for controls
- strained neck.

FACTORS TO CONSIDER INCLUDE:

- the seat should be adjustable
- the seat suspension should be adjusted for the height and weight of the driver
- drivers should be encouraged to take breaks to avoid long periods of sitting
- frequently used controls at a comfortable AND easily reachable position
- mirrors should be positioned to avoid strain
- other controls should be within the main visual view and within reach.

ACCESSING TRUCKS

Getting in and out of truck cabins can create hazards, especially with larger trucks. Access may require stretching or awkward postures and this should be avoided where possible.

Injuries can be reduced by not jumping out of trucks. The driver must always maintain at least three points of contact when entering or exiting the cab.

A good way to address this problem is to encourage drivers to raise any safety concerns that they have and to implement improved design in response.

RISK FACTORS ARE:

- wet or slippery hand/ footholds
- different designs for each truck
- first step being too high / subsequent steps being too high
- a swinging first step
- no or poorly located handholds
- hidden/recessed stairways.

NOISE

Noise is dealt with specifically under health and safety regulations. The regulations require you to take all practicable steps to eliminate hazardous noise levels. If noise is above the specified level, hearing protection must be provided and signage erected.

The maximum noise limit is $L_{Aeq} 8h$ of 85 dB(A) and L_{peak} of 140 dB (A). This is roughly the noise that would require you to raise your voice to be heard by someone one metre away.

Signage must set out that the level of sound is hazardous, that hearing protection is required and the location of hearing protection.

Prolonged exposure to noise can cause stress and hearing damage. Drivers are exposed to many sources of noise - wind, exhaust, traffic, engines etc.

A recent study found that almost all drivers were being exposed to noise levels above the recommended exposure limits, a problem compounded by working long hours.

MEASURES TO CONTROL EXPOSURE TO HAZARDOUS NOISE LEVELS INCLUDE:

- installing air conditioning
- closing windows on the driver's side
- positioning communication systems for easy listening
- installing sound- and vibration-absorbing material
- improving exhaust systems
- positioning the exhaust on the passenger side
- positioning external mirrors to reduce wind noise
- installing air silencers for park brakes and air starters
- providing hearing protection
- checking noise levels as part of the vehicle maintenance programme.

FIRST AID KITS

There is no express requirement for first aid kits to be fitted in all cabs, although you may decide that it is reasonable to do so.

As with all health and safety requirements, you must look at the context and take all reasonable steps to make work activities safe.

RELEVANT FACTORS COULD INCLUDE:

- whether workers have access to other sources of first aid
- the distance/time away from home base
- the degree of isolation
- the worker's ability to contact help in an emergency (eg. radio/mobile phone).

SMOKEFREE VEHICLES

Smoking in a company vehicle, especially trucks that are shared, is an issue best handled with agreement from all employees.