

Street Collection Vehicle Safety

While the day-to-day operations of your waste and recycling collection crew may seem routine to you as the owner or manager, to your employees they are anything but—every day your collection employees encounter serious hazards that threaten their health and safety. These risks threaten not only the safety of your employees and your vehicles, but also other motorists and pedestrians. However, with the right guidance, you can limit the amount of liability that your employees encounter every day.

Identifying and assessing your company's specific risks is the key to formulating successful strategies that diminish damages and injuries. Therefore, you should consider implementing the following risk control measures in order to safeguard your employees and help improve your current waste and recycling street collection procedures.

Conducting Risk Assessments

Regardless of how monotonous collection work may appear, you, as an employer, are legally obligated to conduct a risk assessment to identify which activities pose risks and who would be affected by those risks, as well as develop strategies to neutralise the potential hazards.

Initiate an open discussion with your employees about what problems exist in their daily operating procedures in order to identify present risks. Use these discussions as a tool to help formulate safer work practices. Whatever strategy you and your team may produce, all successful strategies involve providing your employees with adequate training and easy access to safety materials.

Managing the Risk

Your waste and recycling crews must contend with hazards that present risks in all aspects of their day-to-day operations. By addressing and ensuring your business has the following components, you can effectively manage your risk:

While the day-to-day operations of your waste and recycling collection crew may seem routine, your employees encounter hazards that present risks while on the job.

- **Vehicle Safety** – All waste and recycling collection vehicles, as enforced by the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency, need to be fit for purpose, roadworthy and must incorporate essential safety features. This involves performing daily condition checks, maintaining a clean vehicle as well as properly adjusting mirrors and CCTVs. To ensure vehicle safety, keep adequate records on daily inspections, vehicle maintenance and staff training.
- **Safe Systems and Work Environments** – Schedule collection routes for times that will least impact the flow of traffic. This involves identifying all high-risk areas such as steep slopes and areas affected by adverse weather conditions. Finally, be aware of the type of materials your employees are collecting and train them in decontamination procedures.

Provided by Blackfriars Insurance Brokers Ltd

The content of this Risk Insights is of general interest and is not intended to apply to specific circumstances. It does not purport to be a comprehensive analysis of all matters relevant to its subject matter. The content should not, therefore, be regarded as constituting legal advice and not be relied upon as such. In relation to any particular problem which they may have, readers are advised to seek specific advice. Further, the law may have changed since first publication and the reader is cautioned accordingly. © 2015 Zywave, Inc. All rights reserved.

Street Collection Vehicle Safety

- **Worker Safety** – Drivers must be regularly assessed to determine their skills, competencies and the condition of their physical and mental faculties. Along with regular evaluations, drivers must possess adequate knowledge, instruction and training on hazards and safe work practices. This involves knowing how to avoid risks associated with musculoskeletal disorders, road procedures and safety, as well as the proper use of personal protective equipment.

Fulfilling Your Management Duties

As a manager, you are responsible for providing employees with a safe work environment. Failure to perform this essential duty could lead to non-compliance, fines, injuries or even prosecution. However, by possessing an in-depth awareness and understanding of the working mechanics of your company's day-to-day operations, you can increase competency and accountability of your employees as well as your business. Maintaining up-to-date, detailed records of your practices and procedures allows you to evaluate which areas of your business, if any, may be subject to increased chance of risk or low operational efficiency.

Focus on areas such as regular operational procedures as well as the design and layout of your depots and collection routes. Include your employees in these evaluations to help determine if their supplied hardware (bins, receptacles, compactors) are located effectively and properly maintained. Regular reflection and review provides you with an opportunity to revise these problem areas and maintain an efficient, safe environment for your employees.

Reducing the Risks – Reversing

With the constant changing nature of the street—pedestrians, vehicles, weather—reversing is the leading cause of waste and recycling vehicle accidents. Even with the presence of a reversing agent, the person who provides drivers with directional hand signals to help them avoid pedestrians or other vehicles while alerting others on the street of the collection vehicle's presence, some hazards need more foresight to avoid. Implement these preventive

measures to increase your foresight and minimise the hazards that your crews may come in contact with while on the job:

- Communicate with householders and customers to re-locate waste and recycling collection points in order to avoid having to reverse.
- Provide adequate training for drivers, reversing assistants and loaders on the different reversing manoeuvres.
- Investigate accidents, incidents and near misses to ensure that safe work practices are being implemented.
- Plan collection times to avoid:
 - Busy times on major roads
 - Shopping areas during opening hours
 - School start and finish times
 - Reversing into the sun

Safety Is Central

Each day, waste and recycle crews are faced with an ever-changing urban landscape—from inclement weather to shifting street layouts to pedestrians and motorists. While you cannot completely avoid all hazards, you can certainly minimise them. Remember, successful street vehicle collection safety is based on thorough employee training and by possessing an in-depth understanding of the day-to-day operational procedures of your business as an owner or manager. For more information on ensuring your workers' safety, contact Blackfriars Insurance Brokers Ltd today.