



OPERATING SKIP TRUCK LOADERS ON SLOPES

WorkCover and the Waste Contractors & Recyclers Association have identified dangers associated with operating a skip truck loader on slopes. In some cases, the slope on which a skip loader can safely lift a bin may be much less than the slope it can be parked on.

An incident occurred in the driveway of a construction site, where a skip truck operator was seriously injured by their vehicle. The operator was operating a hydraulic skip loader system from the external controls, located behind the cabin of an 11 tonne vehicle, when the vehicle suddenly moved down the driveway. As a result, the operator was crushed between the vehicle and a fence.

As this incident illustrates, people can be seriously injured or killed by 'runaway' skip loader vehicles where there is a sole reliance on a parking brake, particularly when deploying stabiliser legs. Skip loader stabiliser legs have the potential to raise the rear wheels of the vehicle off the ground rendering the parking brake ineffective, as they usually operate only on the rear wheels.

How to prevent these types of incidents

Safety measures for existing vehicles

- n Retrofit "all wheel" parking brakes.
- n Install a handbrake interlock to prevent bin lifter operation if the brake is not on.
- n Replace stabiliser "leg wheels" with flat plates.
- n Install in-cabin hydraulic controls and/or remote hydraulic controls.
- n As a last resort, use wheel chocks to secure vehicles when working on slopes.

If wheel chocks are required as one of the control measures, it's imperative to have in place - and maintain - a safe system of work that ensures that wheel chocks can be used effectively in every situation. This includes the following:

- ü Location – determine which wheels are to be chocked.
- ü Type – determine the chock type and dimensions to be used.
- ü Vehicle limitations – determine the steepest slope the vehicle can safely operate on and provide means for the operator to assess the slope on site.
- ü Vehicle surge – determine whether the chock system can withstand the shift in the centre of gravity of the vehicle when a skip is being loaded or unloaded.
- ü Ground conditions – consider surfaces that reduce the friction effect of chocks on the wheels – for example, wet, icy or muddy ground, or concrete where there may be dirt, debris or moss on the surface.
- ü Rear wheel contact with the ground – if required for braking effect, ensure that rear wheel contact is maintained with the ground when extending the rear stabiliser legs.
- ü Training & Supervision – ensure that operators receive adequate information, training and supervision on the safe use of chocks.
- ü Falling objects – adequately secure chocks when not in use.

Note that chocking only front wheels may have a limited braking effect as the front wheels are relatively lightly loaded. Chocking only rear wheels may also have a limited effect as stabiliser legs lighten the load on rear wheels.

Safety measures when purchasing new skip loader vehicles

- n Ensure that the vehicle has all-wheel parking brakes, which can be activated prior to lowering the stabiliser legs.
- n The manufacturer should provide information on the steepest slope on which the vehicle can safely be operated for bin lifting.
- n Ensure that the vehicle comes with a spirit level or other means so that the operator can assess whether a slope is within the bin lifter's range.
- n Ensure that the operator can view the lifting area when using 'in cabin' controls – eg reverse camera or mirrors.

Employer Obligations

When selecting and using skip loader vehicles.

- § Consult with your employees regarding the operation.
- § Identify the hazards associated with the operation of skip loader vehicles that are specific to your workplace. Assess the risks and eliminate or control them. Keep records of your risk elimination / control measures and review those measures regularly.
- § Provide skip loader vehicles that are appropriate for the bins.
- § Provide and maintain a safe system of work for loading/unloading the skips. This should include the provision of information on equipment limitations and how to work safely on slopes.
- § Make sure your skip loader vehicle operator is adequately trained and competent to operate the vehicle and skip loader.
- § Provide enough supervision to ensure that your skip loader vehicle operator is following instructions.
- § Make sure your skip loader vehicle and related accessories are well maintained and ready for safe operation.

Operator Competence

The skip loader vehicle driver must be competent in using the vehicle and the skip loader as per the manufacturer's instructions. This includes knowing:

- § the capacity of the skip loader
- § how to determine whether the loaded skip is within the skip loader capacity
- § the features of the skip loader
- § how to load/unload on sloping ground, including how to determine whether the slope – and surface conditions – is within the vehicle's limits
- § how to park and prepare for the lift
- § how to check the vehicle before using it
- § how to conduct routine maintenance checks.

FURTHER INFORMATION

OHS Regulation 2001 (Chapter 6) – PLANT

WorkCover Code of Practice 2004 – MOVING PLANT ON CONSTRUCTION SITES

WorkCover Guide 2001 – PLANT

WorkCover NSW: www.workcover.nsw.gov.au

WCRA – Waste Contractors & Recyclers Association of NSW (www.wcra.com.au)

West-Trans Equipment (skip loader converters) (www.west-trans.com.au)