



Vacuum Tanker Safety in the Liquid Waste Industry

The purpose of this safety training material is to ensure that operators of Vacuum Equipped Trucks have a complete understanding of the operating standards and safety practices associated with the use of this equipment. The intention of the Waste Contractors & Recyclers Association of NSW in the making this DVD is for organisations to use this material as training for existing Employees and Contractors and in the induction of new Persons into the Liquid Waste Vacuum Tanker Industry.

Some frequently asked questions

Question

What hazards exist in the operation of a vacuum tanker in the liquid waste industry?

Answer

Hazards are identified in the risk assessment / safe work method statements process. These may include (without limitation):

- Work Environment – examples include night time, poor lighting, heat, cold, wet weather and noise
- Manual handling – examples are hoses & pit covers.
- Slips, trips and falls.
- Working around heavy vehicles – pedestrians, co- workers, traffic & fatigue.
- Working with plant – in this case vacuum & pressure
- Workplace substances – hazards include exposure to eyes, skin, breathing, ears, limbs etc
- Working at heights
- Confined spaces

The risk assessment process

The risk assessment process is an essential part of improving safety at work.

By undertaking a risk assessment Employers and Head Contractors are reducing the chances of injuries occurring in the workplace. This is achieved by engaging relevant Employees and Sub Contractors in the identification of risks and hazards, then ensuring that safe work method statements are developed that detail safer ways of undertaking the work.

The various activities involved with the collection and disposal of liquid waste should be the subject of risk assessments and safe work method statements.

More information on risk assessments can be obtained from the WorkCover website www.workcover.nsw.gov.au or by calling 13 10 50

Question

Personal Protective Equipment (“PPE”) is designed to protect the wearer against particular hazards and should only be used by persons who have received suitable instructions in its usage.

What types of PPE are typically required when operating a vacuum tanker in the liquid waste industry?

Answer

Subject to suitable risk assessments and safe work method statements select from the following (without limitation):

- Disposable overalls
- Regular overalls with high visibility strips
- Chemical resistant / flammable rated overalls
- Wet weather gear
- High visibility safety vest
- Full face mask with breathing apparatus
- Safety (face) shield
- Hard hat with goggles & ear muffs
- Splash resistant goggles
- Hearing protective devices
- Half face mask with respiratory device
- Eye wash bottle filled and ready for use
- Flammable rated torch
- Long PVC gloves, chemically resistant for hazardous jobs
- Short PVC gloves, chemically resistant for general use
- Steel capped boots
- Dangerous Goods Initial Emergency Response Guide
- Safety harness for working at heights

Question

What are the different items that a Driver needs to inspect in a pre-start checklist for a heavy vehicle and vacuum tanker?

Answer

It is the Driver's responsibility to check that all aspects of the vehicle & tanker are in safe operational order, free of defects and clear of any hazards that are likely to create an operational or transport risk. Subject to a risk assessment and a safe work method statement, a 'pre-start check' by the Driver may include inspection (and testing) of the following (without limitation):

- Check all fluid levels (oils, coolants, brake fluid, transmission, fuel etc)
- Test all park lights, brake lights, indicators and emergency lighting
- Check all tyres for pressure, wear and damage
- Ensure that the windscreen is clean, that there is no rubbish within the cab of the truck and that the dashboard is free of any loose materials.
- Test the operation of the braking system, including the hand brake.
- Inspect manways, primary shut-off, secondary trap, vacuum pressure gauge, vacuum relief valve, pressure relief valve, mufflers, silencers, hoses, loading valves and unloading valves

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For more information on any aspect of Vacuum Tanker Safety in the Liquid Waste Industry contact the Waste Contractors & Recyclers Association of NSW. Phone 02 9604 7206

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