Health & Safety

Health & safety is an important consideration in all workplaces. The manual handling of bulky waste and the use of large collection vehicles will need to be managed safely, particularly as it is likely that members of the public will be in the vicinity of collection operations.

By law, any organisation contracted to carry out bulky waste collections must ensure; so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare at work of all [its] employees (Health & Safety at Work Act 1974, Part I, Section 2). This means that the employer must ensure staff are fully trained and risk assessments have been carried out.

Even if the local authority is contracting the service, it has a duty to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that persons not in [its] employment who may be affected are not exposed to risks to their health or safety (Health & Safety at Work Act 1974, Part I, Section 3). That is, the local authority must ensure that their contractors are competent to undertake the required service by checking copies of risk assessments, method statements, liability insurance and health & safety policies. This needs to be done on a regular basis not just at the initial stages.

Crew health & safety

Manual handling
According to the HSE, musculoskeletal disorders account for approximately one third of all reported injuries in the waste management industry. The majority are associated with collection activities. The following factors influence the likelihood of suffering a manual handling injury whilst lifting bulky waste:
- the load weight;
- receptacle type and design;
- vehicle design;
- collection frequency;
- street environment;
- training;
- systems of work; and
- working outside an operative’s capabilities.

If manual handling is unavoidable, for example during bulky collections within a domestic property, steps should be taken to reduce the risk of injury. Refer to HSE guidance on the regulations and/or the short guide ‘Getting to Grips with Manual Handling’, for information on how to go about this.

Movement of vehicles
The safety of vehicle movements is important across all bulky waste collection operations. However, particular risks may be identified when bulky waste is being collected at, or taken to, a HWRC, due to the potential manoeuvring restrictions in the site and proximity of members of the public. The HSE has produced guidance entitled Safe Transport in the Waste Management and Recycling Facilities,
Bulky Waste Guidance: Health & Safety

which outlines best practice and is aimed at waste management facility managers, their staff, and safety professionals within waste management companies.

The guidance is aimed at a variety of different waste management facilities, and covers directing traffic, signage, vehicle movements and reversing on site, driver checks, site layout and more. The guidance can also be used by the operator of the site to produce legally required traffic management risk assessments which will result in good quality procedures and traffic plans. Of particular relevance to those dealing with bulky waste onsite will be guidance on how to reduce the risks associated with reversing vehicles.

Movement of bulky items
Operatives responsible for moving bulky items, for example using a fork lift truck or a raised trolley to lift items out of a vehicle or to move around a shop, should ensure that the equipment is:
- strong and stable enough for its particular use;
- positioned and installed to minimise risks;
- used safely; and
- subjected to ongoing examinations and inspections.

More information can be found in the HSE’s Simple Guide to the Lifting Operatives and Lifting Equipment Regulations (LOLER). Those responsible for operating lifting equipment, or managing another person who does, will also benefit from advice in the guidance documents Safety in Working with Fork Lift Trucks and the HSE’s Simple Guide to the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations (PUWER).

Collections from within people’s homes and potential violence and abuse
Where collections are made from within customers’ properties, the local authority should be assured that the contractor has adequate procedures in place and employs appropriate, trained staff to undertake the work. Staff should be CRB checked and work to guidelines including procedures such as:
- Present ID and confirm collection request with householder.
  - Only ever enter property if an adult is present.
  - Avoid entering property alone.
- Check that items correspond with collection request and are presented as agreed.
- Note potential hazards and proceed to move items with due care.

The HSE has provided guidance on potential risks and management of violent or abusive behaviour from customers. It includes guidance for managers and staff, creating good customer relations and practices, and methods to detect and defuse potential problems. It outlines some of the risks, types of incident and successful measures encountered in similar jobs. Advice on training can be found through the main HSE website www.hse.gov.uk http://www.hse.gov.uk/violence/toolkit/customers.htm http://www.hse.gov.uk/violence/hslcasestudies/solihull.htm

There are a number of techniques for spotting and managing potential difficulties, but the key message from the HSE is ‘Walk away’: employees receive full support from their managers if they
‘walk away’ from a situation in which they feel uncomfortable or threatened. This is considered the most successful form of violence prevention.

**Third party health & safety**

**Householders and members of the public**
Householders and members of the public donating items, either by collection from their home or by bringing them to a HWRC, should also be aware of health & safety implications. Members of the public who are moving bulky items should be made aware of safe manual handling procedures. The call centre could provide advice.

**HWRC site users**
There are a number of health & safety issues that occur on a HWRC, ranging from vehicle movements to slips and trips to manual handling. Guidance is available from the HSE on Operating Civic Amenity Sites Safely. The guidance covers vehicle movements, falls from heights, slips and trips, machines, staff (including PPE) and more. The guidance explains some key health & safety issues that may occur on site, and outlines how to remove or reduce the risks that they present.

Members of the public using the site should be mindful of the nature of such a site, and should stay in public designated areas, obeying notices at all times. Staff noticing that visitors do not abide by the rules should talk to them and explain the requirements.

Ideally the site would be of split-level design, for ease of loading materials, and traffic would be managed to successfully segregate pedestrians and traffic. Clear signage, good housekeeping and responsive staff will help manage the site safely for public users.

**Risk assessments**

A risk assessment is an often simple but careful examination to identify what on the site or in the workplace could cause harm to people. The risk assessment allows you to ensure that adequate precautions have been taken to prevent harm. The HSE leaflet Five Steps to Risk Assessment takes the reader through the follow five steps to complete a risk assessment:

- Step 1: Identify the hazards
- Step 2: Decide who might be harmed and how
- Step 3: Evaluate the risks and decide on precautions
- Step 4: Record your findings and implement them
- Step 5: Review your assessment and update if necessary.