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Christine Snaith

The Health and Safety Executive's Christine Snaith explains why the body is taking a hard line on telehandler visibility

ON FEBRUARY 12, Construction News published an article headed '**HSE** visibility campaign causing confusion on site'. Confusion is not the intention.

An operator's inability to see people and hazards in blindspots makes telehandlers unsafe. This is why the Safe Vehicle element of the **HSE**'s Workplace Transport Priority Programme includes the issue of driver visibility.

Manufacturers, importers and users all have parts to play in ensuring telehandlers can be used in safety.

Manufacturers and importers should supply machines that can be operated safely in their intended conditions of use and users must select suitable machines for their operations.

Up until early 2001 the **HSE** was investigating a telehandler accident every couple of months. Incidents are now occurring more frequently and serious or fatal injuries often result.

Our accident investigations suggest that lack of visibility from the driver's position is a contributory factor in about half of incidents. Combined with other work **HSE** has undertaken, this leads us to believe that manufacturers are not always complying with their legal duties and the machinery standard.

HSE has now formally written to manufacturers asking them to review their risk assessments, to demonstrate that their machines meet legal requirements and to rectify any problems.

Several telehandler manufacturers have in recent years invested a great deal of design effort into improving visibility from the cab without relying on vision aids. Everyone agrees on the primacy of safety considerations but there are differing views regarding what complying with the law and relevant standard mean in practice.

The Supply of Machinery (Safety) Regulations 1992 requires manufacturers to ensure that: "Visibility from the driving position must be such that the driver can in complete safety for himself and the exposed persons, operate the machinery and tools in their intended conditions of use. Where necessary, appropriate devices must be provided to remedy hazards due to inadequate direct vision."

European Standard EN 1459 for telehandlers requires that: "The truck design shall provide sufficient visibility to enable the operator to carry out all travel and manoeuvres safely.

"In order to aid the operator to avoid collisions when visibility is limited, built-in devices shall be provided (e. g. mirrors, cameras and monitors, raised or reversible operator position, audible and visual alarms, etc)."

HSE inspectors will visit a number of major manufacturers to fully understand their concerns

before a meeting planned for next month.

In due course, users and hirers will be alerted to the potential need for additional visibility aids and the action to take. In the meantime **HSE** continues to welcome positive ideas and contributions to this initiative. In taking this line with manufacturers we want to achieve a common understanding between **HSE**, suppliers, hirers and users, and to ensure a level playing field. **HSE** is not seeking to specify particular visibility aids or design changes, just to see that the law is complied with.

We believe improved indirect vision is needed in many cases because of significant blindspots and that improvements can be achieved in the short term using visibility aids.

In the longer term manufacturers may wish to design more elegant solutions to the visibility problem.

Christine Snaith, Health and Safety Executive n If you have a strong view about this or plant in general, contact: [andrew.gaved @construct. emap. com](mailto:andrew.gaved@construct.emap.com)