

Lessons Learnt – Traffic Incidents in the workplace

Following several serious traffic incidents recently occurring at workplaces, it is a good opportunity for employers to re-assess the management of traffic hazards throughout their own workplaces, and establish if the risks are effectively being controlled.

What types of traffic incidents have recently occurred?

WorkSafe Victoria has recently prosecuted a waste recycling company for an incident involving a vehicle-on-plant collision between a sweeper vehicle and a front end loader, which resulted in the death of an employee. The area where the incident occurred frequently had pedestrians, items of plant, and other vehicles working in close proximity to each other. The following items were reported to have led to the fatal event:

- Lack of formalised designated areas for pedestrians, plant or other vehicles;
- Absence of documented traffic management procedures;
- Inadequate information, instruction and training; and
- Lack of communication and/or investigation subsequent to previous incidents and near misses, which may have led to the implementation of preventative actions.



An additional two fatal traffic incidents have been reported in New South Wales which also involved items of plant in docking/loading areas.

What operational areas are affected by traffic hazards?

Workplaces which are frequented by pedestrians, items of plant, or other vehicles must be considered for traffic control, including:

- Loading and unloading areas;
- Entrance and exits to/from facilities;
- Delivery areas/customer pick-up areas;
- Apron/turnaround areas;
- Car parks;
- Warehouses; and
- Construction areas.



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What are employers' obligations?

Employers have a duty to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that their workplace is safe and without risks to health. As a result, the following steps are required where operational areas have the potential to be affected by traffic hazards:

1. Identify the hazards, such as vehicles reversing, blind spots, and pedestrian access across areas.
2. Manage the risks (via such measures as protective barriers to separate pedestrians from plant/vehicles, designated walkways, line marking, training, PPE, speed limits).
3. Review and maintain the control measures.

It is of the utmost importance that employers re-assess risks and control measures in the following instances:

- Following a near miss, or incident;
- When a change in the work environment occurs;
- Subsequent to amendments to industry/regulatory requirements; and
- At an appropriate specified interval (such as on an annual basis).

What are the implications of traffic incidents?

The implications of traffic incidents are widespread. No matter how minor the incident, reactions to such events can result in:

- Financial restitution (for either the injured party or their family);
- Injured employees or other stakeholders unable to return to work either in the short or long term;
- Employees who witnessed or heard of the incident becoming dissatisfied in the current condition of the workplace and fearful of similar incidents occurring, leading to a drop in staff morale and an increase in staff turnover;
- Prosecution, leading to legal fines and penalties; and
- The community creating a negative image of the workplace and its output(s), leading to decreased revenue.

The extent of staff and community reaction is likely to be more significant as the severity of an incident increases.



How can we help you?

Prensa can assist in the management of traffic risks via the completion of Traffic Management Risk Assessments and development of site-specific Traffic Management Plans. Prensa's team comprises highly competent consultants who are trained in these services, contributing to effective mitigation of risks in the workplace.

For further information, contact us on the details below.