

# Car Transporters – Thorough Examination

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## Background

In the last few years, there have been a number of fatal accidents involving car transporters, resulting from falls off the upper deck. Accidents mostly involve persons falling more than 2m over the edges. Falls through openings in the decking and off ladders also occur, though these are much less common and a survey of accident reports has indicated that serious injuries are less likely in these latter scenarios.

## Legal Requirements

Falls from height are the biggest killer in the workplace and the second biggest cause of major injuries. Two thirds of these major injuries are the result of 'low falls' (i.e. falls below 2m). These facts have been the main driver behind the Health & Safety Commissions (HSC) decision to press for a single set of goal setting regulations governing working at height. This bulletin sets out the practical measures which could be employed by operators of plant and equipment in the workplace where a risk of personal injury exists resulting from a fall from any height.

Fencing is one means by which falls from height can be prevented. However, there are practical difficulties in providing the required standard of 'secure fencing'. For example, depending upon the size of the vehicle on the transporter deck, fixed fencing could make it impossible to open the vehicle door or for people to move between the vehicle and the guard rail.

## Edge Protection

For most types of car transporter, the fitting of edge protection on the upper decks; comprising of fixed posts and rails of plastic coated steel wire rope tensioned between the posts should be effective to prevent persons from falling from the edges. Where there is any slackness in the wire rope, the maximum sag should be no more than 20mm.

## Decking and Ladders

As well as the risk of falls over the edge, there could be openings in the centre of the decking through which people could fall. Where reasonably practicable, all openings should be covered. However, it is rarely practicable to cover over the gap between the runways on the upper deck, which is needed to facilitate the tying down of vehicles from the deck below, the risk is small as judged by the tiny percentage of recorded fall accidents that arise from this cause.

To reduce the risk of slipping on wet or greasy surfaces, the decking should have an anti-slip finish and be provided with suitable rainwater drainage points. Surfaces should be regularly checked for diesel, oil and lubricating grease and materials for dealing with such spillage's as well as snow and ice, should be readily available for drivers to use when they are away from their base depots.

Where possible, all surfaces should be maintained free from potential tripping hazards.

All ladders, including any fitted to the front of the tractor unit, should be of sufficient height, width and strength, and securely fixed in position.

## Other Precautions

Drivers often have to work in areas where they could impact their heads against hard objects (i.e. when tying down vehicles on the upper deck). Where the risk assessment highlights any activity where this could cause injury, employers should consider providing suitable personal protective equipment (i.e. bump caps) and actively encourage their use.

To further reduce the risk of slips, trips and falls, vehicles should only be loaded/unloaded in areas where the lighting is adequate. Where car transporters are fitted with loading lights, these should be positioned so that they do not dazzle drivers moving vehicles on/off or when tying down.

On the top deck particularly, positioning guides that act as end stops are usually provided at the front of the peak deck. Following several recent incidents where vehicles were accidentally driven right off the front of car transporters, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has recommended that such devices should be at least 25% of the tyre diameter of the vehicle being transported.

## The Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations 1998 (LOLER)

When the LOLER was introduced, a decision was made and communicated widely throughout the industry that the LOLER did not apply to car transporters because their lifting mechanisms were considered height adjustment devices. This is no longer considered tenable and the LOLER should now be considered as applying to both new and existing vehicles.

In practical terms, on the basis that an effective maintenance programme is already in place, the main additional consequences of this will be:

- Each lifting deck should be marked with its safe working load.
- Thorough examination will be needed for transporters, following major refurbishment or repair, and at intervals to detect deterioration arising from wear and tear. In practice the frequency of the periodic thorough examination will be 12 monthly, or as deemed necessary by the Competent Person.
- For transporters being put into service for the first time, a declaration of conformity should be available from the final manufacturer for the transporter machinery as required by the Supply of Machinery (Safety) Regulations 1992 as amended. If the operator has received such declaration made not more than 12 months before the transporter is put into service, then an initial examination is not required. Otherwise, an initial thorough examination is needed before the transporter is put into service for the first time.

We can offer a professional and independent interpretation of legislation in order to aid compliance in a practical and cost effective manner.

**For further information, please contact our Engineering Standards Department on 01428 726118.**