



**SUPPLY CHAIN SAFETY  
LEADERSHIP GROUP**

# **Highways Safety Hub Raising the Bar 25 Legal Loads**

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## Objective

This Raising the Bar Guidance Document provides guidance and reminders to all National Highways suppliers and contractors of their legal responsibilities to ensure all vehicles are safe and legal, loaded with goods, tools and equipment that do not leave the vehicle and present a road safety risk to road users.

## Scope

The expectation is that this Raising the Bar Guidance Document will apply across all National Highways worksites and will be implemented by all supply chain partners working with National Highways. Please note that aspects of this guidance will apply to National Highways contracts and suppliers. This raising the bar covers the securing of loads. For guidance on accessing vehicles see Raising the Bar 16 and vehicle road worthiness see Raising the Bar 37.

## Background

Insecure loads continue to be a significant health and safety hazard. If a load is not secured and it falls into the road it presents risk to all road users. The most significant insecure load incidents in the United Kingdom have tragically resulted in fatalities and life changing injuries to road users and pedestrians.

Each year, DVSA issue over 2,000 prohibitions to drivers of vehicles which present a road safety risk because of poor load security. Insecure and unsafe loads on vehicles cost UK businesses millions of pounds in damaged goods.

## Governance Requirements

Supply Chain Partners must be satisfied that all mitigation measures have been considered and exhausted with respect to Elimination and Isolation prior to accepting proposals for Engineered Controls.

## Minimum Requirements

The following elements are mandatory requirements and suppliers shall ensure these elements are applied fully on National Highways sites.

**Mandatory Elements**

- › A load restraint system must be in place and have the combined strength to withstand a forward's force not less than the total weight of the load to stop it from moving under severe braking and half the weight of the load moving sideways and backwards.
- › Carry out a risk assessment evaluating potential risks involved in loading/unloading.
- › Provide load securing equipment in a good working condition.
- › Ensure the maximum permitted gross vehicle weight and axle weights are not exceeded.
- › Ensure vehicles and trailers are roadworthy and repairs promptly carried out.
- › Include confirmation of load security as part of the driver's pre-use walk around check.
- › Record, investigate and take appropriate action following the report of a load security related incident.
- › Deliver regular training provided to all employees involved in the loading/unloading of vehicles.

**Load Security****Why is load security important?**

- Reduces the likelihood of falling items from vehicles causing injury to the driver and other road users and pedestrians.
- Reduces the likelihood of items falling off vehicles causing damage to road surfaces.
- Reduces the likelihood of fines and prosecutions.
- Reduces the likelihood of delays and inconvenience to road users.
- Prevents goods being damaged before reaching their destination point.
- Protects company brand, reputation, and future employment opportunities.

### What is a load?

The load on a vehicle is not just restricted to goods being carried. The load is anything being carried on the vehicle. Tools, equipment, machinery, load restraint equipment, signage, and raw materials can be classified as being part of the load being carried on a vehicle and must be safely and securely fixed to the vehicle.

### What are the main causes of insecure loads?

- Poor load planning.
- Insufficient load securing.
- Unsuitable vehicle selection.
- Lack of operator and driver training.
- Poor condition of load securing equipment.
- A lack of appreciation of the risks and responsibilities.

## Responsibilities and consequences

### Who is responsible for load security?

- The driver is ultimately responsible for the load carried on their vehicle, regardless of whether they were involved in the securing of the load.
- Any employee (loader, warehouse person, supervisor, manager, etc.) involved in the loading or unloading of a vehicle has a responsibility to ensure it is carried out safely and securely.
- **The operator of the vehicle can be found liable if they cause or permit another to use a vehicle or trailer on a road when the security, weight position, or distribution of its load causes a danger of injury to another person.**

### What are the possible legal consequences?

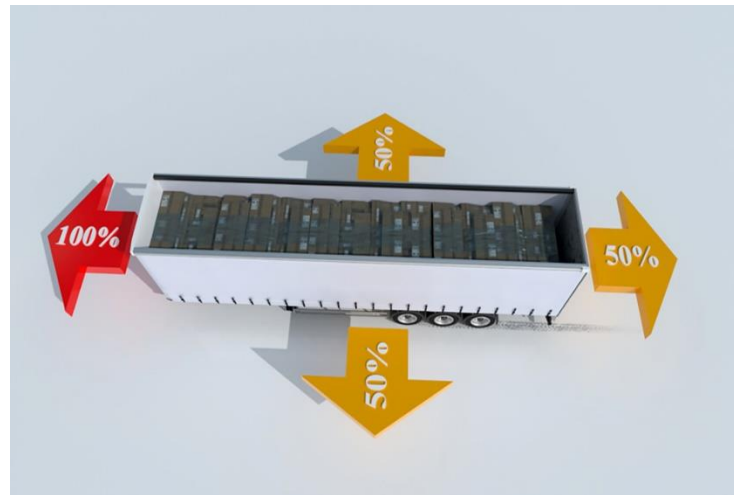
- An immediate prohibition where the driver will not be able to move the vehicle until the load securing problem is fixed.
- Penalty points and a licence endorsement for the driver, where a vehicle is deemed to be in a dangerous condition.
- An unlimited fine.
- Suspension of the driver's vocational licence.
- HSE prosecution.
- Legal proceedings against the driver and/or the vehicle operator.
- Suspension, curtailment, or revocation of an operator licence.

Note: load security incidents on light goods vehicles can impact the operator licence where a mixed fleet is being operated.

## Load Restraints

### What different load restraint methods are available?

The combined strength of a load restraint system must be enough to withstand a forward's force not less than the total weight of the load to stop it from moving under severe braking, and half the weight of the load moving sideways and backwards.



*The forces required to prevent a load from moving under normal driving conditions.*

[Securing loads on HGVs and goods vehicles - 2. Load securing: the basics - Guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/securing-loads-on-hgv-and-goods-vehicles-2-load-securing-the-basics)

The method of load restraint used must be suitable for the vehicle and load being carried, and it must be able to restrain half the weight of the load to the side and rear, and the full weight forward.

Different methods include:

- load-rated nets
- ropes and sheets
- webbing straps and chains

- tarpaulins with integral straps
- internal curtains
- ratchet straps
- bars
- toolbox securely fix to the rear of a vehicle for small tools and loose materials

### **Reducing the likelihood of losing a load**

#### **Steps to take to increase the likelihood of a secure load.**

- Create a culture which promotes safe and secure vehicle loading/unloading.
- On larger Projects contractors should employ load coordinators who will consider, determine, and plan for the appropriate and correct means of transporting loads.
- Carry out a risk assessment evaluating potential risks involved in loading/unloading.
- Implement a safe system and risk control measures to prevent injury whilst loading/unloading.
- Provide employees with access to relevant resources covering load security and risk management.
- Deliver regular training provided to all employees involved in the loading/unloading of vehicles.
- Remind employees of their responsibilities around vehicle loading/unloading.
- Only use vehicles which are fit for their purpose and capable of moving the load safely and securely.
- Provide load securing equipment in a good working condition.
- Position the load as close to the vehicle headboard as possible and with the centre of gravity as low as possible.
- Ensure the maximum permitted gross vehicle weight and axle weights are not exceeded.
- Use sufficient load restraint equipment, suitable for both the vehicle type and load being secured.
- Ensure vehicles and trailers are roadworthy and repairs promptly carried out.

#### **What additional load safety checks can you implement?**

- Include the type, number, and condition of load security equipment as part of the driver's pre-use walk around check.
- Include confirmation of load security as part of the driver's pre-use walk around check using 4 simple questions:
  - Can the load slide forwards or backwards?
  - Can the load slide sideways?

- Can the load topple over or fall, or make it unstable?
  - Are there any loose items that could fall?
- Provide communications to drivers on the loads they are carrying and load security equipment available for use.
- Provide access to weighbridge facilities for drivers to ensure vehicles are safe, legal, and not overloaded.
- Carry out internal spot/gate checks on load security and safety as vehicles leave and enter the site.
- Arrange external assessment and monitoring by an independent, third party.
- Record, investigate and take appropriate action following the report of a load security related incident.

## People Requirements

### Training and Competency Requirements

There is no specific accredited training required for ensure legal load security, but employers must deliver regular training provided to all relevant employees involved in the loading/unloading of vehicles. This must include familiarisation of the load secure system for the load, including what load restraints are being used and how to ensure they are used correctly.

## Emergency Arrangements

### Site Emergency Plan

### Reporting and Recording

Any significant incidents or high potential near miss events involving lost loads must be reported immediately to the National Highways Project Manager or Sponsor and investigated in accordance with their potential severity.

Where required by GG128 incidents must be logged on the National Highways HART incident reporting system. Investigations must be made promptly, openly and any lessons learned shared appropriately.

All observations including the unexpected movement of a load should be reported to the site team so that the suitability of the load secure plan can be reviewed and appropriate action taken as required.



## References

Links to relevant guidance and further information can be found in the following places,

- DVSA Safety of loads on vehicles: code of practice <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safety-of-loads-on-vehicles-code-of-practice>
- DVSA Load securing: vehicle operator guidance <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/load-securing-vehicle-operator-guidance/load-securing-vehicle-operator-guidance>
- Load security: how DVSA enforce the rules <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cjeBg4SABZw>
- HSE Load security <https://www.hse.gov.uk/logistics/load-security.htm>
- Driving for Better Business <https://www.drivingforbetterbusiness.com/resources/search-results/?search=load+security>
- FORS Safe Loading <https://www.fors-online.org.uk/cms/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/V6-Safe-loading-1.pdf>