

Shanks Waste Management Ltd

Footwear changes lead to reduction in ankle injuries

Reducing falls from vehicles case study 5

This case study is part of a series, which give examples of good practice to reduce injuries due to falls from vehicles through sensible management of health and safety risks in the workplace.

The challenge

Shanks Waste Management uses multiple pick-ups to collect waste. During a year, the company calculated that their drivers made about 2.5 million cab entries and exits to and from their lorry cabs, some of which, almost inevitably, resulted in slip and low fall accidents. Identifying that low falls from vehicles was an issue they began to look for a solution.

The company had already improved the quality of steps and handholds on their vehicles and daily checks ensured access equipment was in good condition.

Drivers received 'toolbox talks' to tell them about safe ways of accessing vehicles and instructions on entry and exit were included in training, but the company were still left with a residual risk of injuries due to getting in or out of the cab.

The company identified that footwear was an area that they could improve.

What's changed?

Workers were wearing rigger boots for work, which offered little ankle support when climbing on or off vehicles, especially when the leather was worn.

The company changed the style of boot worn by their employees to a laced up boot that offered more support. The company continued to provide good access to the vehicle, to carry out daily checks on the vehicle and to train employees to get on and off the vehicle safely.

The results

A year after introducing the change in footwear, the company recorded a third less ankle injuries to drivers.

Geoff Smallwood, UK H&S Manager, for Shanks said: 'It seemed obvious to us. You would never go for a hike across rough ground wearing leather wellies, you would wear good lace-up hiking boots. Riggers offer very little ankle support and the change to good quality lace-up boots with ankle protection has resulted in a major improvement.'

The change from providing good quality rigger boots to a good quality laced boot was cost neutral, but savings were made due to the reduction in ankle injuries.