



# Reversing vehicles guidance for the parcel carrying industry



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# 1. Introduction

The PCSA recognises that workplace transport is the second largest cause of workplace fatalities in the UK and that a quarter of all deaths involving vehicles at work occur during reversing. The parcel carrier industry operates within time critical windows, to meet the collection and delivery expectations of both our customer's and their recipients' and transport operations are conducted at tens of thousands of locations daily.



Managing transport operations safely, in particular, reversing manoeuvres, must be a priority for our industry to protect health and wellbeing of our personnel, our customers, the public and any other person who may be affected by our activities.

Given the variety of vehicles, operating locations and conditions experienced by drivers in our industry it is impossible to provide specific guidance on how to manage all reversing operations safely. The key message is that reversing should be avoided wherever possible.

The PCSA recognises however, that this is not always practicable, therefore all reversing operations should be subject to a suitable and sufficient risk assessment. This should take account of the many hazards presented by such things as the vehicle, location, operating environment, activity, time of day, weather conditions and the presence and nature (e.g. school children and the elderly) of pedestrians.

This guidance document provides an overview of the issues encountered by PCSA members in relation to vehicle reversing operations and some of the measures available to reduce the risk.

# 2. The Driver

Transport operators have a duty to provide vehicles that are fit for purpose and suitably maintained and are also responsible for checking their drivers have the appropriate licence and are fit to drive that vehicle.

Drivers are responsible for checking their vehicle remains roadworthy by undertaking daily pre-use checks. Any defects should be reported to management and any safety critical defects must be repaired before the vehicle departs. Drivers should not take control of any vehicle if they do not hold the appropriate licence and should advise their employer if they are not fit to drive.

Prior to departure, drivers should familiarise themselves with their vehicle's size, controls, blind spots and any available driving aids. Drivers must ensure they have effective vision from their vehicle at all times. The area of the windscreen swept by the wipers must be free from obstruction and vehicle mirrors must be correctly positioned to provide the optimal field of vision. They should also be undamaged, clean and free of condensation.

Organisations and drivers should plan their route so that reversing operations are minimised wherever possible. Where reversing cannot be avoided, drivers should keep the distance travelled to a minimum. Drivers must ensure the reversing operation is undertaken safely with due regard to vulnerable pedestrians such as children and the elderly.

Drivers should be instructed in the effective use of any reversing aids but it is essential these are used in conjunction with, rather than as a substitute for mirrors. Drivers must also be prepared to reverse without such aids as they may not be available in all vehicles, particularly replacement of hired vehicles.

In cab devices including radios, data terminals, mobile phones and reversing aids can become distractions during vehicle manoeuvres. Drivers must maintain concentration at all times and where necessary should switch such devices off. Simple measures such as turning the radio off will help the driver focus during the reversing operation.

### 3. Reversing Aids

A variety of reversing aid systems are available both as factory fit and after-market additions. Before deciding on a system, organisations should consider the type of vehicle and how, where and when it is to be used. Feedback from drivers during any trials of such equipment is essential.

Vehicles and trailers can be fitted with proximity sensors giving an audible warning to the driver of potential hazards. There are also systems available which are linked to the braking system. The sensors engage when reverse gear is selected, controlling the speed; if a potential hazard comes too close to the vehicle, the brakes are automatically applied. The driver is also warned via a warning light and buzzer system.

Camera systems can be installed to provide drivers with a view of the area to the rear of the vehicle. Care should be taken to use such systems in conjunction with the vehicle mirrors as the view from the camera can be restricted. These systems can however, assist when reversing an articulated vehicle if the view in the mirrors is obscured by the trailer.

Audible reversing alarms are now standard on most commercial vehicles. Such systems are aimed at warning pedestrians that the vehicle is reversing.

Organisations considering the use of reversing aids should take into account the purchase and installation costs, ongoing maintenance costs, effectiveness and ease of use.

It may be possible for organisations to arrange a trial of a proposed system. Such trials should involve the drivers to provide end user feedback and ensure that the system operates as expected, is user friendly and ultimately reduces the risk associated with reversing operations.

## 4. The Location

Where an organisation has operational control of a premises, the traffic routes should be designed to eliminate, so far as is reasonably practicable, reversing operations. This may be achieved through, for example, the provision of one-way systems. The PCSA recognises however, that it is not possible to completely eliminate reversing from our industry due to the use of loading docks and conveyor systems, which require the vehicle to back onto the loading bay.

Where the need to reverse cannot be eliminated organisations should:

- Reduce the number of reversing operations
- Ensure any lighting is appropriate
- Ensure pedestrians and vehicles are appropriately segregated
- Consider physical barriers to limit the extent of any reversing.



Implementing operational controls at a location is essential. As part of this they should provide suitable and sufficient information, instruction and training to drivers and those who may be affected by their actions. This should include:

- Site rules and operating procedures which can be issued to drivers and form part of an induction programme. Consideration must be given to foreign or agency drivers where their first language may not be English
- Safe systems of work detailing how activities should be undertaken
- Restricted access times so that vehicle movements do not coincide with peak pedestrian movements e.g. shift start/finish times
- Ensuring personnel use appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) at all times.

All controls should be supervised and monitored to ensure they remain effective.

## 5. Collection and Delivery Locations

Organisations in the parcels industry visit a variety of collection and deliveries locations every day including commercial, retail, domestic and industrial premises. Drivers face many delivery issues ranging from narrow streets to complex industrial sites with strict access and PPE requirements. To assist the driver, organisations should, wherever possible, request information about the nature of the site before any deliveries/collections take place. Some examples of locations encountered are listed below.

### Industrial / commercial / warehouse premises

Hazards may be similar to those experienced at the driver's base location although site rules and PPE requirements may vary. Drivers should request information prior to attempting access where information has not been provided in advance.

### Schools/Education establishments

These are likely to have restricted delivery/collection times which do not coincide with school start/finish times. Delivery/collection points may be separated from pupils but this cannot be taken for granted. The driver may need to consider parking away from the delivery point and making the delivery on foot using a sack truck or other mechanical aid.

### Shopping centres / High street shops

Shopping centres may have dedicated service yards or delivery areas that are segregated from the public and are likely to have site rules to aid safe deliveries. The high frequency of vehicle movements in these areas can create additional risk. Drivers must be aware of other vehicles and drivers when manoeuvring in these areas.

Collections and deliveries on the high street are likely to result in significant interaction with pedestrians including children and the elderly. The timing of deliveries/collections at high street locations is vitally important and organisations should request information from such locations at the earliest opportunity. Deliveries to the high street environment result in interaction with the general public who are likely to have less awareness of reversing vehicles.

For further information, please visit [www.parcelcarrierssafety.com](http://www.parcelcarrierssafety.com) or on Twitter  @safetyparcel