

## Accident Advisory: Worker pinned by fallen goods from container

Ref: 1819069 WSH Alert Accident Notification dated 6 December 2018

On 22 November 2018 around 7.20pm, a forklift driver was inspecting the goods inside a container that had just arrived at the common area of an industrial building. At that time, a pallet full of rubber sheets from the container fell onto him. The worker became unconscious and was subsequently pronounced dead at the accident scene.



Figure 1: Overview of the accident scene.

## Recommendations

Persons in control of similar workplaces and work activities, such as occupiers and employers, are advised to consider the following risk control measures to prevent similar accidents:

### Ascertain the contents

- Before opening a container door, ascertain the contents inside the container and how they have been arranged by referring to the container packing plan and/or checking with the supplier.
- Ensure workers are briefed of the possibility of goods being displaced or toppled during transit and the attendant risk of these goods falling on them when opening the container's door.

### Establish a safe work procedure

- Develop a Safe Work Procedure (SWP) for inspection of goods inside a container. The basic steps to consider are:

- Adopt a safe position and gently open one door partially (typically the right door)\*.
- Ascertain if the goods have shifted.
- If it is assessed to be safe, open the first door fully.
- Inspect the container contents again.
- If it is assessed to be safe, open the second door fully (typically the left door).

\* To facilitate safe checking, consider securing the container doors to each other using a suitable container door-

restraint, such as a short safety rope, to prevent goods from falling out while opening the first door partially. The safety rope must be of adequate strength to hold the doors in a partially-opened position and able to withstand the force exerted by any goods resting against the container door.

- Provide workers with the necessary personal protective equipment (e.g. safety helmet with chin strap, safety shoes) for basic protection against falling goods when opening a container door.
- Train workers on the precautionary measures as specified in the SWP for checking of goods inside a container, bearing in mind the possibility of heavy goods falling out the moment any container door is opened.

### **Safe container packing**

- Remind the upstream supplier(s) of goods (and all involved in the supply chain) on the requirement for the goods inside the container to be properly secured. If the goods are on pallets, they must be fastened to the pallet (e.g. by shrink-wrapping or stretch-wrapping the goods to the pallet). Otherwise, the goods must be adequately contained (e.g. by placing them in a crate) or restrained to prevent the goods from being displaced or toppled while in transit. This will significantly reduce the risk of goods falling out once a container door is opened.
- Request from the respective suppliers for a container packing plan to provide information on the contents of the container such as the list of goods, the weight of each item, the arrangement of goods inside the container and how they have been secured to prevent toppling and displacement.

For more information on how goods may be arranged for better stability and properly secured, please refer to the [WSH Guidelines on Safe Loading on Vehicles](#).

### **Risk Assessment**

Conduct a thorough Risk Assessment (RA) for all work activities to manage any foreseeable risk that may arise when opening a container door. The RA should cover, but is not limited, to the following areas:

- The possibility of goods falling out once a container door is opened and the importance of adopting a safe work position when opening a container door.
- The manner in which vehicles are driven such that cargo is not destabilised.
- Effective communication on the hazards to workers, e.g. by placing warning signs/labels/stickers at container doors.