

## **REVERSING IN WASTE RECYCLING COLLECTIONS**

*This WISH information document is aimed at health and safety improvements in the waste management industry. The Health and Safety Executive provided support to WISH in producing this guidance. This guidance may go further than the minimum you need to do to comply with the law with regard to health and safety*

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## Introduction

This information document provides guidance on reversing vehicles for waste collection activities. This activity causes a disproportionately large number of accidents and injuries to collection workers and members of the public. This information document provides guidance on understanding, controlling and managing the risks surrounding reversing vehicles whether the activity is being carried out as part of a domestic (municipal) or commercial perspective as well as clarifying the roles, responsibilities and definitions of key terminologies used in relation to the task.

## Background

Reversing during waste collection presents risks which are typically not present in other workplaces, often because complete control cannot be exercised over the street environment because of factors such as:

- The street layout/geography
- Street furniture (parked cars, lamp posts, bollards, trees, etc.)
- Other vehicles
- Pedestrians – members of the public, who have an equal right to be present on the street, and may not recognise the risks or be able to take evasive action
- Weather – varying weather conditions

In addition, the variety of people at risk of being struck by reversing waste vehicles is diverse, including the following:

- Loaders alongside the vehicle and reversing assistants involved with manoeuvres
- Pedestrians, including:
  - Children (who might not understand the risks)
  - People with impaired sight / hearing or limited mobility
  - People wearing headphones for personal entertainment or using mobile devices such as phones/tablets
  - People engaged in other work activities i.e. roadside construction
- Other road users such as motorists, cyclists and horse riders who might unexpectedly appear during reversing operations

## Managing the risks

### Risk Assessment

A risk assessment should be carried out to identify the most appropriate control measures for each set of circumstances.

For municipal collections this means carrying out a route risk assessment that identifies specific locations where reversing might present additional risks, such as schools, hospitals, difficult junctions etc., and where further controls might be required. The assessment should aim to eliminate reversing wherever possible or otherwise reduce the need for reversing.

For commercial collections, an assessment should be carried out of each customer's premises to identify any specific hazards and determine any specific controls to eliminate, reduce or control reversing, stipulate collection times etc.

For more detailed guidance, refer to WISH WASTE 23 'Safe waste and recycling collection services' (available from the WISH web site).

Dynamic Risk Assessment also has a hand to play. Divers and Loaders should be trained in order to acknowledge the principles of a dynamic and personal risk assessment which are:

- **Stop** – always take time to assess the situation or route prior to carrying out any reversing activities
- **Think** – about you and others around you that may be affected by your actions
- **Observe** – Look for not only obstructions that may impair your manoeuvre but also any potential hazards that could endanger your reversing assistant or a member of the public
- **Proceed** – Once all these factors have been taken into account, if in any doubt, stop and get out to assess the area. Only if it is safe to do so then proceed with caution

- **Stop** – what you are doing
- **Think** – about what you are going to do.
- **Observe** – look at the area your about to go into
- **Proceed** – if safe to do so if not get out and look!



## Reducing the Risk

Wherever possible you should control the risks by:

- Eliminating reversing
- Reducing distances reversed
- Employing risk reduction measures

Examples of risk reduction measures include the following:

- Liaise with householders and customers to relocate waste and recycling collection points
- Use of appropriate vehicles
- Ensure collection methods are appropriate, e.g. bin and container size, double or single sided collections etc
- Plan collection times, to avoid:
  - Busy times on major roads
  - Shopping areas during opening hours
  - School start and finish times
  - Reversing into the sun
- Use of properly fitted reversing aids on vehicles
- Use of suitably trained and instructed reversing assistant/s

However, where your risk assessment indicates that the use of reversing aids alone is insufficient to adequately control the risks during reversing, it is highly recommended that trained reversing assistant/s are deployed.

## Reversing manoeuvres and use of assistants

### What is a reversing assistant?

A reversing assistant is defined as an employee who plays an active part in a reversing manoeuvre by giving prearranged hand signals to drivers. Their primary role is to stop collisions with pedestrians and other road users. Reasons for deployment include:

- Where the reversing manoeuvre cannot be eliminated
- Where the reversing manoeuvre is conducted in a public place

Reversing assistants must be deployed on each and every occasion providing that there is someone additional to the driver trained to act in this capacity and it is safe to do so considering the environment i.e. crush zones. Their role is to:

- Signal the collection vehicle driver to start or stop when necessary to prevent the vehicle colliding with pedestrians and other road users
- Warn approaching vehicles or pedestrians

*Note - Where reversing assistants are required to assist drivers to safely manoeuvre the vehicle, for example by indicating clearance distances between the vehicle and obstructions on the street, then additional training is essential.*

Reversing assistants have a responsibility for their own safety and for other people's safety; however, the ultimate responsibility for the manoeuvre remains with the driver.

### What a reversing assistant is not

A reversing assistant in the context of this guidance document is not a banksman, signaller or traffic marshal. These have specific roles, responsibilities and training expectations that are different and used in other applications, for example; a banksman is someone who controls the vehicle movement through signals and holds the responsibility for the manoeuvre whereby a reversing assistant is an aid to a driver who ultimately is responsible for the safe manoeuvre.

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Due to the constantly changing circumstances during collections and the unpredictability of members of the public, (who are often not aware of the dangers of working vehicles reversing on the street), many organisations have concluded that they will always use reversing assistants whenever available to the driver as long as it is safe to do so. It remains the driver's overall responsibility (under Road Traffic Law) to ensure that reversing manoeuvres are undertaken as safely as possible.

Reversing assistants should **not** be deployed where to do so would expose the reversing assistants to greater hazard or risk than their deployment would control.

## Responsibility and accountability

Table 1 below identifies the key responsibilities on the driver and reversing assistant, if available. To accompany this the 'Why' they are responsible and the 'How' they will achieve this is outlined.

| Driver   | Why   | How  |
|--|---|--|
| Responsible for manoeuvres, if unsure of surroundings gets out and has a look  | Ultimately in control of the vehicle and qualified competent driver.                | Slow and controlled manner using all aids available with constant vigilance      |
| Determining whether a reversing manoeuvre is safe and necessary in the first instance                                      | Because through dynamic risk assessment he is aware of vehicle size and constraints | Dynamic, Route and Customer Risk Assessment                                      |
| Ensuring vehicle aids are in good, clean and in an operational order   | To ensure all aids are utilised and efficient to the manoeuvre                      | Driver pre-use checks and defect reporting                                       |
| Ensure his fellow colleagues do not put themselves in a dangerous position behind or within close proximity of the vehicle | Ultimately stop injuries (which could be fatal) to their work colleagues            | Stops vehicle if loses sight or expects colleague is too close and communicates. |

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| Assistant  | Why  | How   |
|--|--|---|
| Responsible for the immediate area at the rear of the vehicle  | Ultimately stop injuries (which could be fatal) and prevent collision damage to property | Stops vehicle through signal if hazardous situation presents itself                         |
| Ensure when walking with vehicle full view of immediate area behind vehicle is maintained                                  | To ensure is any hazard presents itself he can act promptly and signal driver to stop    | Stops vehicle through signal if hazardous situation presents itself                         |
| Ensure his fellow colleagues do not put themselves in a dangerous position behind or within close proximity of the vehicle | Ultimately stop injuries (which could be fatal) to their work colleagues                 | Stops vehicle through signal if hazardous situation presents itself                         |
| To start when safe to do so and stop the manoeuvre when a hazardous situation presents itself                              | To be an additional pair of eyes for the driver in their vision restricted areas         | Starts when no hazards are present and Stops vehicle if hazardous situation presents itself |

Drivers must be empowered to make decisions regarding their collections' routes. If it is of the opinion of the driver the safe collection cannot be achieved then they must not proceed and inform the servicing depot with reasons as to why, so the customer can be informed, and investigation undertaken if necessary.

## Reversing signals used

Each employer through risk assessment will determine the appropriate signals to be used which should be built into any training received by the collections' teams. As a minimum this should comprise of a start and stop signal.



Signal to start a reversing manoeuvre. Both arms raised with palms facing in and arms moving forwards and backwards



Signal to stop a reversing manoeuvre. Right hand raised palm facing out.

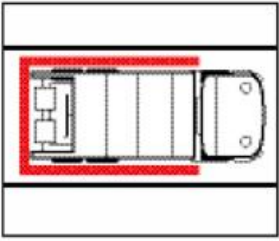
## Reversing procedures

- Only trained reversing assistants should assist reversing vehicles
- It is recommended that drivers and reversing assistants undertake the same training to ensure commonality of understanding
- Before making the manoeuvre, the driver and reversing assistant should communicate and agree essential factors, such as where the reversing assistant will be positioned at the start, and whether this will need to change as the manoeuvre proceeds etc. This will vary as each location is different
- The reversing assistant should stand at least 5 m back from the rear of the vehicle, and in such a position that eye contact can be maintained with the driver in either the near or off-side mirror so that the driver can see them at all times



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Reversing assistants should **NEVER** stand directly behind the vehicle or in the crush zone.

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Crush Zone</b></p> <p>The crush zone is the area immediately to the side of the vehicle and at the rear. Recommended distances for reversing assistants are to remain a distance of 5m behind and 1m to the side. It is to prevent being crushed between the vehicle and a stationary or fixed object i.e. wall, car, etc.</p> |  |
|--|---|

Reversing assistants should:

- Stand on the pavement wherever possible to avoid being struck by other vehicles
- Be able to see the driver in the mirror
- Never walk backwards while giving signals (this poses a slip/trip risk)
- Be sure the driver can see them at all times
- Show clear pre-agreed hand signals
- Only signal when it is safe to reverse
- Be alert and aware of pedestrians in order to warn them if necessary that the vehicle is reversing

Drivers should:

- Ensure that the reversing assistant understands the manoeuvre about to be undertaken
- **Not** reverse until the reversing assistant is in position and has signalled that it is safe to start reversing
- Reverse slowly and never faster than the reversing assistant can walk in order to maintain a minimum 5m safe distance
- **Stop** immediately if they lose sight of the reversing assistant and not recommence the manoeuvre until eye contact has been re-established, and a restart signal given

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Other collection workers should:

- **Not** load whilst the vehicle is reversing
- **Not** be in the crush zone during reversing, i.e. between the rear/sides of the vehicle and fixed objects such as walls, lamp posts or cars
- Remain vigilant and observant while the vehicle is reversing
- Avoid distractions

## Reversing manoeuvres

- If possible, collection vehicles should drive forward into cul-de-sacs, turn at the bottom and drive out forwards
- If reversing cannot be avoided the procedure should be “reverse in – load out” to reduce the risk of being struck by a reversing vehicle

***Warning** The procedure known as ‘working in’ (i.e. vehicle reverses, stops, is loaded, reverses, stops, is loaded etc. until reaching the end of the cul-de-sac, before finally driving forwards to exit the street) has caused fatal accidents and should not be used.*

## Single manned reversing activities (commercial collections)

There may be times when a driver is operating a vehicle on their own and will have to reverse without the use of a reversing assistant mainly experienced in the commercial environment.

The risk factors here are the same albeit slightly different than those in street collections. Most commercial collections are undertaken on a customer’s premises whereby a risk assessment has been conducted identifying strict controls such as marked and segregated walkways, assigned collection points away from pedestrian footprint, signage, access control, inductions, etc. All of these can help to reduce the risk along with the vehicle aids fitted and driver competence outlined further below.

The manoeuvre should be performed in a slow and controlled manner. If the driver needs to exit the vehicle to observe the surroundings then they must ensure the keys are removed.

***Note:** It is an Employers responsibility to ensure there has been suitable risk assessments undertaken and risks are controlled to as low as reasonably practicable.*

## Supervision and monitoring

Supervision and monitoring should be carried out to ensure safe systems of work are being followed, are appropriate, and all potential risk have been identified. Supervisors and Managers must ensure that reversing operations are carried out safely and should:

- Ensure that where there is a crew, at least one member has been trained as a reversing assistant and that all crew members receive training as soon as this can be arranged. Where a driver is assisted by a single loader, that person must be a trained reversing assistant
- Ensure their drivers, reversing assistants and loaders, are adequately trained and competent to carry out their duties safely
- Provide instruction, information and written, agreed, safe systems of work that can be easily understood. This may need to take account of situations where English is not the first language
- Monitor work periodically, including investigating accidents, incidents and near misses to ensure safe systems of work are used and are effective. WISH Information Document INFO 03 Effective proactive monitoring in waste and recycling collection activities (available from the WISH web site) provides example checklists and a matrix to assist managers and supervisors who may be involved with monitoring
- Carry out periodic inspections and competency assessments to establish whether refresher training is needed

## Training and competence

The industry has developed a standard training package that can be utilised for delivering reversing assistant training to both drivers and loaders which clearly outlines the role and responsibilities and pre-reversing considerations. Employers can utilise this and adopt to make specific to their working instructions.

Training should be refreshed at appropriate intervals determined by competency assessments and procedures. The material should include practical elements and observation of reversing manoeuvres to demonstrate understanding of procedure and methodology.

## Disclaimer and WISH

This information document has been prepared by health and safety practitioners to assist health and safety improvements in the waste management industry. It is endorsed by the WISH (Waste Industry Safety and Health) Forum. This information document is not formal guidance and represents good practice, which typically goes beyond the strict requirements of health and safety law.

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The Waste Industry Safety and Health (WISH) Forum exists to communicate and consult with key stakeholders, including local and national government bodies, equipment manufacturers, trade associations, professional associations and trade unions. The aim of WISH is to identify, devise and promote activities to improve industry health and safety performance.

## Useful links and further reading

WISH WASTE 09 Safe transport in waste management and recycling facilities

WISH WASTE 04 Safe use of waste and recycling vehicles in street collection

WISH WASTE 23 Safe waste and recycling collection services

WISH INFO 10 Safe use of refuse collection vehicle bin lifters and bins

WISH INFO 11 Safety in driver only commercial collections

WISH REF 01 Example daily periodic check sheets for street collection vehicles

WISH REF 02 Case Studies bin lifters and bins on waste vehicles

WISH REF 03 Example refuse recycling collection round data sheet

WISH REF 04 Example format driver assessment

All WISH publications are available from the WISH web site as free downloads.

Waste Industry Safety and Health (WISH) Forum can be found at <https://wishforum.org.uk/>

HSE's waste website: [www.hse.gov.uk/waste](http://www.hse.gov.uk/waste)

Workplace transport safety: An employers' guide HSG136 HSE Books 2005 ISBN 978 0 7176 6154 1 [www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/hsg136.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/hsg136.htm)

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