

Opening and closing curtain-siders

THE PROBLEM

Curtain-siders are widely used in the road transport industry, but operators aren't always aware of the dangers involved with opening and closing a curtain. Poor handling of the buckles, curtains and poles can result in a range of injuries.

SAFETY ISSUES

Common Causes of Injury

- Buckles flailing in windy conditions
- Poorly maintained pole securing mechanisms
- Securing and releasing buckle
- Pulling curtain
- Shifting loads (typically smaller loads such as parcels)

Resulting Injuries

- Head injuries
- Hand and finger injuries
- Finger, thumb and hand injuries
- Back and shoulder strains
- Various injuries caused by load falling onto operator when curtain is opened

CONSEQUENCES OF INJURY

Direct Cost

- Lost wages (ACC can only pay from 2nd week at 80% of previous year's wages)
- Medical cost surcharge for doctors, medical specialists and chemist
- Loss of hours that vehicle can be charged out

Indirect Cost

- Pain and suffering from injury, affecting both ability to work and enjoy private life
- Cost to hire replacement driver
- Possible loss of contract while replacement driver obtained
- Psychological stress of pain, boredom and inability to work normally

EXAMPLES – The following details are taken from real-life incidents:

What led to injury?

- Driver was tensioning the curtain
- Driver caught little finger on curtain track
- Driver was pulling curtain open

Injury Sustained

- Back injury
- Little finger tip amputated
- Back injury

Direct Cost

- \$1,125
- \$3,168
- \$1,494



Hazard sheet

Correct procedure for opening and closing curtains



OPENING THE CURTAIN

- Always wear safety gloves.
- Release tensioner at one end. Undo buckle/strap nearest end pole, then release and remove end pole.
- Remove rest of buckles in order, keeping your body behind fastened buckles at all times (this way, you won't be in the way of any load that falls).
- Using two hands, release foot of free pole.
- Stand at the end still attached, grasp two buckles of curtain and pull backward to open. Don't try to slide the whole curtain at once – do it in sections.
- Remember – support poles are under a lot of tension, so when releasing a pole, DON'T stand in front of it – instead, stand beside it so you're well clear of hinge swing area.
- Use your body weight to do the work – avoid twisting your body.



SECURING THE CURTAIN

- Always wear safety gloves.
- Lock in each intermediate pole before closing curtain.
- Close curtain by securing one end, then close curtain towards other end (usually towards tensioner end).
- Secure free pole into tensioner.
- Wind tensioner up until curtain is very taut between end poles.
- Fasten ALL over-centre buckles.



WINDY CONDITIONS

- In windy conditions, keep buckles fastened when curtain is open, to stop curtain blowing in wind.
- In very windy conditions, open one side at a time, and if possible, only half of each side.

