

COMMERCIAL VEHICLE SAFETY BULLETIN

Excessive Build-up of Snow and Ice on Commercial Vehicles



During the winter months, snow and ice accumulations can be seen on the tops of commercial vehicles, such as straight trucks, intermodal containers, large trucks, trailers and buses.

This sight, which is common throughout the province, is a significant safety concern for occupants of commercial and passenger vehicles on our highways. The problem goes beyond the temporary loss of visibility when loose snow blows off the trucks and trailers; when the accumulated snow melts and freezes, thick chunks of ice may form. When these pieces dislodge during transit, the result could be catastrophic to vehicles and passengers. The pictures above show the damage to one truck. The driver was also injured from the glass.

Routinely cleaning snow from commercial vehicles can result in a reduction of potential insurance claims, fines or civil litigation resulting from falling ice. There are also operational considerations from accumulated snow and ice, including size and weight limit violations and lowered fuel economy. However, removing the snow and ice build-up creates its own challenges for the operator who has to clean the vehicle tops.

SAFE/EFFECTIVE PRACTICES FOR SNOW AND ICE REMOVAL

Removing snow and ice from the tops of trailers creates a series of safety and operational challenges. All too frequently, drivers forego any consideration of ice and snow build-up and rely on the snow to harmlessly blow off while the vehicle is in transit. Fresh loose and light snow often does blow off these vehicles with no more harm than a temporary reduction in visibility. However, there are numerous cases where severe vehicle damage and serious personal injuries have occurred.

A simple yet risk laden method of snow removal, requiring virtually no capital investment, is to have workers or drivers climb onto a trailer roof and manually remove snow and ice by shoveling or raking the trailer roof. However, this common practice creates its own set of serious safety issues of slips and falls from trailers, not to mention the potential damage to the trailer roofs.

One solution would be to use a portable snow removal tool. Several models are available for residential applications and some are specifically marketed toward the transportation industry. These light weight roof rakes are portable and can have telescopic and/or flexible handles that allow safe snow removal while the operator stands at ground level.

Other methods for snow and ice removal can be more complex, require routine maintenance, or be cost-prohibitive to a significant portion of the industry. At some major distribution centres or other locations of concentrated commercial vehicle activity, permanent or semi-permanent devices can be found. These structures sweep or scrape snow from trailer tops as the vehicle passes through. An added consideration for these devices is the clean-up, storage and removal of the often substantial quantity of snow that is removed from the vehicles.

APPLICABLE LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS

While Alberta's occupational health and safety legislation makes no specific reference to working on top of trucks or trailers, there are specific requirements related to working at heights above three metres. Part 9, Fall Protection, of the *Alberta Health & Safety code* lays out worker and employer requirements for fall protection, which would apply to typical truck and trailer heights.

Furthermore, the *Traffic Safety Act* and its regulations are enforced by the Commercial Vehicle Enforcement Branch and law enforcement agencies. Some excerpts from the *Commercial Vehicle Safety Regulation 121/2009* are copied below. The fine for contravention of these regulations is also noted.

"cargo" means all articles or material carried by a vehicle, including those used in the operation of the vehicle.

NSC 10 (\$310.00) INSPECTION

3(2) The driver of a vehicle shall inspect the vehicle's cargo and the cargo securement system used and make necessary adjustments:

(a) leak, spill, blow off, fall from, fall through or otherwise be dislodged from the commercial vehicle,

Careless driving TRAFFIC SAFETY ACT (\$543.00)

115(1) For the purposes of this section, a driver of a vehicle is driving carelessly if that driver drives the vehicle

(b) without reasonable consideration for persons using the highway.

(2) A person shall not do any of the following:

(b) drive a vehicle on a highway in a manner that constitutes driving carelessly;

Cargo Securement (\$776.00) COMMERCIAL VEHICLE SAFETY REGULATION, AR 121/2009

17(4) A driver, a carrier or an owner of a commercial vehicle shall ensure that cargo transported by a commercial vehicle is contained, immobilized or secured so that it cannot

(a) leak, spill, blow off, fall from, fall through or otherwise be dislodged from the commercial vehicle,

OHS Contact Centre

Edmonton & surrounding area: 780-415-8690

Throughout Alberta: 1-866-415-8690

Edmonton: 780-427-9999 or

1-800-232-7215

Web Site: www.worksafe.alberta.ca

Commercial Vehicle Enforcement

Main Office, Red Deer: 403-340-5225

Web Site:

https://www.solgps.alberta.ca/programs_and_services/public_security/Documents/Commercial_Vehicle_Enforcement.pdf

Office of Traffic Safety

Main Office, Edmonton: (780) 427-8083

Web Site: www.saferoads.ca

Alberta Motor Transport Association

Main Office, Calgary: (800) 267-1003

Web Site: www.amta.ca

Email: amtamsc@amta.ca

Alberta Transportation

Main Office, Edmonton: 780-427-8901

Web Site: www.transportation.alberta.ca