

Fact Sheet

REFUSE TRANSFER STATION EDGE PROTECTION

A Refuse Transfer Station has the potential to be a dangerous environment, with many risks that should be managed. One of those is the risk of transfer station users (whether they be workers or members of the public) slipping or tripping, resulting in a fall into a pit or open-top bulk bins.

ACC injury statistics show an average of 8729 new claims have been lodged every year for the last five years (2010–2015) as a result of a fall on an industrial site.

Specific injury data resulting from falls, for the same time period, shows average new claim numbers as follows:

- 54 new claims lodged for concussion and head injuries;
- 590 new claims lodged for fractures and dislocations;
- 1621 new claims lodged for lacerations, puncture wounds and stings; and
- 4752 new claims lodged for soft tissue injuries.

What does the law say?

The Health and Safety at Work Act 2015 places a duty on a person conducting a business or undertaking (PCBU) to, so far as is reasonably practicable, ensure the health and safety of workers and other persons from work being carried out as part of the conduct of the business or undertaking.

Additionally a PCBU who designs structures must, so far as is reasonably practicable, ensure that the structure is designed to be without risk to the health and safety of persons who:

- Are at the workplace for the purpose for which it was designed
- Construct the structure
- Carry out reasonably foreseeable activity (such as cleaning or repair)
- Are in the vicinity and exposed to the structure.

Where a structure creates a risk of a fall from height and that risk cannot be eliminated, then controls must be in place to minimise exposure to that risk. Controls to minimise such risks might include:

- Substituting the risk with a lesser risk
- Isolating or preventing persons coming into contact with the hazard
- Implementing engineering controls
- Implementing administrative controls
- Providing personal protective equipment (PPE).

The Health and Safety at Work Act 2015 details a range of injuries that will be defined as “notifiable injuries or illnesses”. These injuries or illnesses are those that require a person to have immediate treatment (other than first aid). Please refer to Part 1, Subpart 3 of the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015 for the full definition.

Such injuries could occur as a result of a fall into a refuse transfer station pit or large open top bin, and therefore would potentially be notifiable to WorkSafe NZ.

Methods to eliminate

PCBUs must, so far as is reasonably practicable, eliminate risks to health and safety, and where this is not possible minimise those health and safety risks. Elimination of the risk of a fall from height at a refuse transfer station could take various forms such as:

Transfer station users tip directly onto a flat floor. Where this option is undertaken, transfer station operators must ensure the hazards of pedestrian and vehicle interaction are adequately addressed.



DOING NOTHING TO PREVENT FALLS IS NOT AN OPTION

Methods to minimise

Edge Protection should be provided at Refuse Transfer Station pits to prevent users from falling and should be a fit-for-purpose design, appropriate to the facility's operations such as:

Permanent barriers placed between the unloading area and pit edge



Handrails or gates used in conjunction with wheel stops set well away from pit edges.

- Top rails should be set between 900mm and 1100mm
- Where the risk of a fall exists, due to transfer station users who may access trailer or truck decks to unload their waste, an additional rail may be appropriate, set at a height between 1500mm and 1800mm
- Sites should assess the need for a mid-rail to be installed halfway between the top rail (as described above) and the working surface
- Rails should be painted in a highly visible paint colour
- The front face/edge of wheel stops should also be painted in a highly visible paint colour.



Administrative controls

- Appropriate warning signs should be installed at the facility and information alerting refuse transfer station users of the fall risk could be provided.
- Operational procedures should be implemented requiring refuse transfer station workers to monitor users of the facility to ensure they do not put themselves at risk while unloading waste.
- It is highly recommended that PCBU's involved in the design, construction, maintenance and operation of a refuse transfer station conduct a risk assessment, which includes working at height risks. These facilities are not all the same, so controls may be different at individual locations.

Reference Material

- Health and Safety at Work Act 2015
- Health and Safety at Work Regulations General Risk and Workplace Management 2016
- MBIE Best Practice Guidelines for Working at Height in New Zealand
- SARNZ Best Practice Guidelines for Scaffolding in New Zealand
- WasteMINZ Health and Safety Guidelines: for the Solid Waste and Resource Recovery Sector
- WasteMINZ Safety Alert 13 March 2015
- Health and Safety Executive Guide on Managing Health and Safety at Civic Amenity Sites
- ACC Injury Statistics Tool www.acc.co.nz

The information in this fact sheet is intended as a general guide only. It is not the source of the law and should not be used in place of authoritative legal documents. Printed documents can become quickly out of date, if the currency of the information you are reading is important, check www.wasteminz.org.nz.

Waste Management Institute New Zealand
+64 9 476 7162
PO Box 305426, Triton Plaza, North Shore 0757
info@wasteminz.org.nz
www.wasteminz.org.nz