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Sample General Safe Work Practice for Loading/Unloading Trailers

Loading and unloading can be dangerous. Machinery can seriously hurt people. Heavy loads, moving or overturning vehicles and working at height can all lead to injuries or death. This guidance should be followed to help avoid problems.

Loading and unloading areas should be:

- Clear of other traffic, pedestrians and people not involved in loading or unloading.
- Clear of overhead electric cables so there is no chance touching them, or of electricity jumping to 'earth' through machinery, loads or people.
- Level. To maintain stability, trailers should be parked on firm level ground,
- Loads should be spread as evenly as possible, during both loading and unloading. Uneven loads can make the vehicle or trailer unstable.
- Loads should be secured, or arranged so that they do not slide around. Racking may help stability.
- Safety equipment must be considered. Mechanical equipment and heavy moving loads are dangerous. Guards or skirting plates may be necessary if there is a risk of anything being caught in machinery (for example dock levelers or vehicle tail lifts). There may be other mechanical dangers and safety procedures to be considered.
- Ensure the vehicle or trailer has its brakes applied and all stabilizers are used. The vehicle should be as stable as possible.
- In some workplaces it may be possible to install a harness system to protect people working at height. Provide a safe place where drivers can wait if they are not involved. Drivers should not remain in their cabs if this can be avoided. No-one should be in the loading/unloading area if they are not needed.
- Vehicles must never be overloaded. Overloaded vehicles can become unstable, difficult to steer or be less able to brake.
- Always check the floor or deck of the loading area before loading to make sure it is safe. Look out for debris, broken boarding, etc.
- Loading should allow for safe unloading.

Please note: This document is for information purposes only as a guide. The safe job procedures (SJP) and safe work practices (SWP) created for your workplace should reflect your organizations processes, equipment and hazards as identified by a hazard analysis. Construction Safety Nova Scotia does not assume responsibility for the use of information in this document. If assistance is needed to complete a SWP and SJP for your organization please contact CSNS member services at constructionsafetyns.ca or 1.800.971.3888.