

Safety Alert

Number 23

9th March 2018



Background

While a driver coupled a loaded trailer to a truck, the combination freewheeled 30 to 40 metres downhill and collided with a stationary timber trailer after crossing a main route used frequently by staff working on an adjacent windfarm site

What happened

The accident was due to an experienced driver not applying the parking brake when he went to connect lines to a trailer he was picking up. As he had turned off the ignition, no brake alarm sounded as he left the truck. The trailer brakes disengaged when the air lines were connected allowing the unit to run downhill. The driver had to jump clear from the space between the truck cab and the trailer as the truck rolled away.

Findings

1. The loader truck left the loaded trailer on an inclined site and did not apply the manual trailer parking break – relying on automated brakes activated by a lack of air pressure
2. The picking up truck connected to the trailer and failed to apply the its parking brakes – being held stationary by the automatic trailer brakes
3. The driver switched off the ignition which deactivated alarms meaning he got no warning about the lack of parking brakes when he exited the truck to complete the trailer coupling tasks
4. The automatic trailer brakes disengaged when the airlines were connected allowing the truck and trailer combination to roll downhill

Corrective Action

1. Site specific risk assessments must be completed where trailer shunting is intended and the Forest Works manager must be informed of these assessment.
2. Shunting (trailer exchange) must be restricted to level sites, where interaction with other road users is minimal
3. Drivers must observe proper procedures for uncoupling /coupling trailers, using parking brakes appropriately
4. A safety alert regarding this incident must be issued to customers, hauliers and staff.

Learning Points

- Hauliers, whether working for Coillte or the sawmill, need to identify sites where they intend to swap trailers in advance of operation
- Hauliers must ensure that site specific risk assessments are completed for trailer swapping, taking account of operational issues, site environment and possible interaction with others
- Standard operating procedures should be part of the risk assessment control measures – additional controls may be necessary
- Hauliers, under their obligations as Contractors in the Code of Practice for Safely Managing Forest Operations, must share their risk assessments with the Forest Works Manager(s) – even where trailer swapping happens away from Coillte property
- Trailer swapping activities must be co-ordinated with those in control of the site where the activity occurs – hence sites adjacent to public roads are probably unsuitable.

Please Don't Walk By



Ensure this Safety Alert is brought to the attention of all employees and sub-contractors using chainsaws.