

## Standard Operating Procedures

Title:- Curtain Sided Vehicle/Trailer Procedure

Document No :- SOP04  
Issue No :- Issue 6  
Issue Date :- 26/10/2023  
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### 1 Objective

To ensure that the process for opening & closing vehicle/trailer curtains, along with load security, loading & unloading of vehicles and trailers is carried out by Company drivers in a controlled and safe manner.

### 2 Scope

To cover the processes that relates opening and closing of the curtain side(s) and the loading, unloading & load security of the vehicle/trailer will be safe and legal for transporting.

### 3 Responsibility

Driver of the vehicle (including trailer) has a legal duty to ensure the load is safe and legal for transporting.



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### 4 Personal Protective Equipment

The operator of the vehicle/trailer must as a minimum wear the following personal protective equipment as specified within the SOP:

1. Safety lace boot (midsole and toe cap protection)



or

2. Safety rigger boot (midsole and toe cap protection)



3. Hi-vis sweatshirt – Class 3, must be worn on any carriageway with a speed of 50mph or above



4. Hi-vis polo – Class 2, must be worn on sites & roads with speeds up to 50 mph



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5. Hi-vis t-shirt – Class 2, must be worn on sites & roads with speeds up to 50 mph



6. Hi-vis jacket – Class 3, must be worn on any carriageway with a speed of 50mph or above



7. Trouser hi-vis banded (Minimum level of protection to be used in conjunction with a higher classed garment)



Shorts Hi-Viz: During warmer weather, Company issued shorts maybe worn to aid in thermal comfort, thus lowering fatigue levels which would otherwise raise various risks, like poor concentration leading to injury from heat stress. Operators must also wear Company issued boots when wearing shorts (unless a specific medical reason has been identified and approved for an individual) Note; the wearing of shorts must not be approved for tasks that involve a high-risk task, which could result in cuts & abrasions or chemicals contamination.



Examples when shorts would not be suitable but not limited to; ADR work, medical waste collections

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8. Hard hat



9. Nitrile heavy knit glove (general handling glove)



10. Safety spec (when there is risk from dust or loose material)



Should the vehicle or trailer be used for transporting ADR materials, please reference ADR requirements for materials being carried.

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## 5 Risk Assessing

Due to the variation on sites that we collect & deliver to, employees must always before they load or unload risk assess the task that is required and identify what equipment is required to perform the task safely.



Operators must always assess what they are required to load or unload and what equipment they must use to ensure that they work safely or is manual handling required.

### Manual Handling;

**Handling devices.** Aids such as barrows and trolleys should have handle heights that are between the shoulder and waist. Devices should be well maintained with wheels that run smoothly. The law requires that equipment is maintained.

**Force.** As a rough guide the amount of force that needs to be applied to move a load over a flat, level surface using a well-maintained handling aid is at least 2% of the load weight. For example, if the load weight is 400 kg, then the force needed to move the load is 8 kg. The force needed will be larger, perhaps a lot larger, if conditions are not perfect (e.g. wheels not in the right position or a device that is poorly maintained). The operator should try to push rather than pull when moving a load, provided they can see over it and control steering and stopping.

**Slopes.** Employees should get help from another worker whenever necessary, if they have to negotiate a slope or ramp, as pushing and pulling forces can be very high. For example, if a load of 400 kg is moved up a slope of 1 in 12 (about 5°), the required force is over 30 kg even in ideal conditions – good wheels and a smooth slope. This is above the guideline weight for men and well above the guideline weight for women.

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**Uneven surfaces.** Moving an object over soft or uneven surfaces requires higher forces. On an uneven surface, the force needed to start the load moving could increase to 10% of the load weight, although this might be offset to some extent by using larger wheels. Soft ground may be even worse.

**Stance and pace.** To make it easier to push or pull, employees should keep their feet well away from the load and go no faster than walking speed. This will stop them becoming too tired too quickly.

For further guidance on pushing and pulling please reference HSE – Risk Assessment of Pushing and Pulling (RAPP) tool along with HSE - Manual Handling at Work.

**General risk assessment guidelines**

There is no such thing as a completely ‘safe’ manual handling operation. But working within the following guidelines will cut the risk and reduce the need for a more detailed assessment.

Use diagram below to make a quick and easy assessment. Each box contains a guideline weight for lifting and lowering in that zone. (As you can see, the guideline weights are reduced if handling is done with arms extended, or at high or low levels, as that is where injuries are most likely to happen.)

Observe the work activity you are assessing and compare it to the diagram. First, decide which box or boxes the lifter’s hands pass through when moving the load. Then, assess the maximum weight being handled. If it is less than the figure given in the box, the operation is within the guidelines.

If the lifter’s hands enter more than one box during the operation, use the smallest weight. Use an in-between weight if the hands are close to a boundary between boxes.

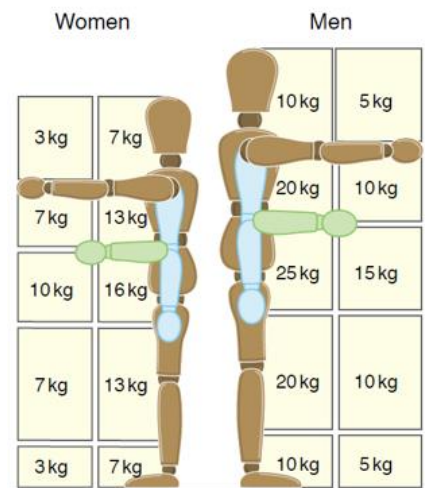
The guideline weights assume that the load is readily grasped with both hands and that the operation takes place in reasonable working conditions, with the lifter in a stable body position.

**Shoulder height**

**Elbow height**

**Knuckle height**

**Mid lower leg height**



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## 6 Operators' health

Personal hygiene: A good standard of personal hygiene is essential to prevent ill health. Employees should act upon the following guidance on cleaning hands (and arms if necessary):

- Before eating
- Before drinking
- Before smoking
- Before using the telephone
- Before taking medication
- Before inserting contact lenses
- Before and after wearing gloves
- Before and after using the toilet

Encountering contaminated material (even if gloves were worn):

Cover all new and existing cuts and grazes with waterproof dressings and/or gloves before starting work. If cuts and grazes occur, clean them immediately with soap and running water and apply a waterproof dressing if possible.

Avoid hand-to-mouth or hand-to-eye contact.

Avoid transferring contamination (e.g., from used gloves) to other objects which may then be touched without protection (e.g., mobile phones).

### To deal with needlestick and sharps incidents:

Encourage the wound to bleed, ideally by holding it under running water. Do not suck it.

Wash the wound using running water and soap, but do not scrub it.

If water is not available, use cleansing wipes from a first-aid kit. Cover the wound with a dry plaster/dressing.

Contact the Transport Office who will arrange and seek medical advice immediately – send the person to the nearest accident and emergency department as soon as the wound has been cleaned and covered, so that an assessment can be made about any further treatment.

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**Exposure to sun:**

In the short term, even mild reddening of the skin from sun exposure is a sign of damage. Sunburn can blister the skin and make it peel.

- Longer term problems can arise. Too much sun speeds up ageing of the skin, making it leathery, mottled and wrinkled. The most serious effect is an increased chance of developing skin cancer.
- Employees should follow Company guidance on sun exposure:
- Keep your top on.
- Wear a hat with a brim or a flap that covers the ears and the back of the neck
- Stay in the shade whenever possible, during your breaks and especially at lunch time.
- Use a high factor sunscreen of at least SPF15 on any exposed skin.
- Drink plenty of water to avoid dehydration.
- Check your skin regularly for any unusual moles or spots. See a doctor promptly if you find anything that is changing in shape, size or colour, itching or bleeding.

If in any doubt about your health please inform your line manager and seek medical advice immediately.

For further information on dealing with health hazards, please reference the Company’s Health Hazard Policy.

**Risk of Attack/Violence**

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE), defines violence at work as “any incident in which an employee is abused, threatened or assaulted in circumstances relating to their work”. Any definition must include incidents leading to death, major injury (requiring medical assistance) and minor injury (requiring first aid or no medical aid). But it is equally important to include threats and verbal abuse even if no physical injury occurs.

Such abuse can lead to physical violence and will contribute to the levels of stress experienced by members. According to the HSE, physical attacks are “obviously dangerous, but serious or persistent verbal abuse or threats can also damage employees’ health through anxiety or stress”. Repeated verbal abuse can also lead to depression, reduced morale and increased sickness absence.

Should an employee be confronted by a member(s) of the public or a customer who are being aggressive, then you must walk away and distance yourself from the situation and not get drawn into any type of debate or argument. If you can, lock yourself inside your vehicle and if required call 999 and report the incident to the Police immediately.

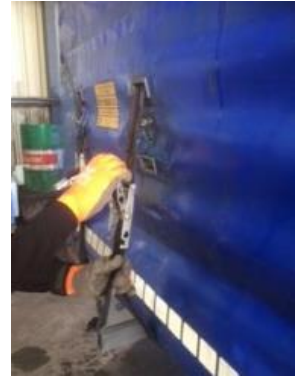
If employees experience any type of physical or verbal abuse then this must be reported and logged with the office immediately.



## 7 Curtain operating

### Opening the curtain:

- Release the curtain buckles starting from the front removing a ratchet hook from the ratchet.
- Release the tension from the front of the ratchet tensioner.
- Lift the front pole off the tensioner and pull the curtain slightly back.
- Start opening the curtain from the rear. Pulling the curtain to the rear and concertinaing it.
- Bunch the curtain to the rear, retain the curtain pole using a load strap to prevent roof damage.



### Closing the curtain:

- Pull the curtain to the front by the pole.
- Make sure the curtain is tucked under the pelmet and put the pole onto the tensioner.
- Ensure the marker indicators on the curtain align at the rear with the bodywork.
- Ratchet the curtain to the front using the tensioner.
- Refit to the curtain buckles and close.



The link will demonstrate opening and closing of curtains in a safe manner:

<https://fleetassess.co.uk/how-to-safely-operate-curtains-on-a-curtain-sided-trailer/>



### 8 Mechanical Lifting Equipment

Operators when loading & unloading must always risk assess to the lift and if possible, only use manual handling as a last resort, even if the load is within the operators' own capabilities of lifting. Operators must always aim to use a mechanical aid to lift and these range from the following but not limited to:

- Forklift (tele or counter lift)



- Manitou



- Pallet Truck



- Sack Truck



**9 Loading, unloading & load security**

On arrival at the location/site park in a safe area and carry out a personal risk assessment. Look for hazards that could affect activities such as low power lines, narrow access points or moving vehicles i.e., forklifts in your location.



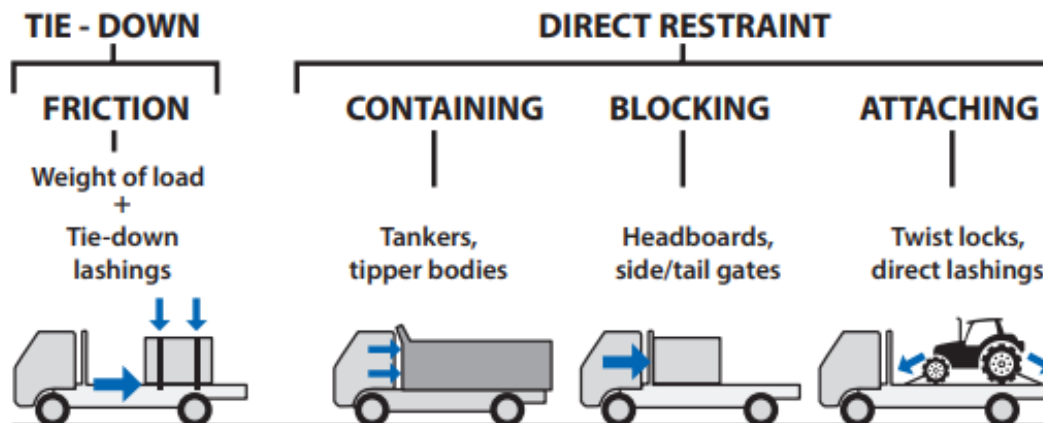
On completion of this assessment any noted hazards must be removed or controlled by you or the client before you attempt to drop/pick up your load.

If your efforts and discussions with the client fail to adequately control these hazards seek advice from your line manager.

What the law requires: load securing is covered specifically by Road Traffic legislation, which requires that loads carried by vehicles must be properly secured at all times. It is an offence for a vehicle to be overloaded or to discharge material onto the public road.

Loads can be restrained by two basic methods, ‘tie-down’ or ‘direct restraint.’

Tie-down is when the load is prevented from moving by friction only, also called a ‘frictional lashing.’ It is an indirect method of restraint. Direct restraint is when the load is prevented from moving by containing, blocking, or attaching it to the vehicle.



The load restraint system should be able to withstand:

- 100 percent of the payload weight in the forward direction,
- 50 percent of the payload weight in the sideways direction,
- 50 percent of the payload weight in the rearward direction.

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Due to the nature of the role, the Company will transport various load types using side curtain vehicles & trailers. So, each job & load must be assessed by the driver prior to loading the vehicle/trailer, and act to secure the load using a safe and legal method. Drivers should use the guidance links to ensure that their assessment of the load and what security is needed is adequate to the task.

By using the following links, these will aid the driver in their assessment of the task:

**DVSA Load securing: vehicle operator guidance:**

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/load-securing-vehicle-operator-guidance/load-securing-vehicle-operator-guidance#foreword>

**Good practice video:**

- <https://youtu.be/HXVQxn24kiw>

**Unloading:**

Operators & staff must unload vehicle/trailers in a safe a manner. Due to the varying load types that may be loaded & that we deal with, they must always risk assess the load to ensure they are using the correct equipment to carry out the unloading task, see section 8 regarding equipment type.

Operators must also ensure they follow third party site rules regarding unloading, which may involve them releasing the curtains and load restraints (see ratchet strap guidance within this document) and retreating to a safe area, until unloading (or loading) has taken place i.e., vehicle cab or viewing area.

**Company sites:** unloading third party or company vehicle/trailers, site staff must ensure the operator of the vehicle parks in the designated area and makes the vehicle/trailer safe for unloading by ensuring:

- area is clear of other traffic, pedestrians and staff not involved in loading or unloading.
- Vehicle/trailer is level to maintain stability, trailers should be parked on firm level ground.
- vehicle or trailer handbrake is applied
- vehicle engine is switched off (unless required to operate vehicle in any way for unloading)

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- vehicle keys are secured and out of the ignition
- curtains released and pulled back (ensure these are secured)
- driver retreats to safe area i.e., their cab when unloading take place
- site staff assess the load prior to starting i.e., what equipment is required and is it suitable to lift the load and follow guidance if load has shifted
- follow training on the safe use of fork lift or telehandler equipment for unloading
- have prearranged area for load once removed from vehicle/trailer and does not become a hazard or obstruction itself



**Note:** for the use of loading ramps when accessing shipping containers, see Company SOP for further guidance on loading and unloading.

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When loading or unloading is taking place, operators must ensure that no one is at risk from crushing from but not limited to i.e.

- Forklifts
- Overhead cranes
- Traffic
- Loads



Operators must always assess the working area to determine a safe operating area for every job. This must always be relayed to others.

Checks must be made before unloading to make sure loads have not shifted during transit, and are not likely to move or fall when restraints are removed.

Should the load become unstable, any operator must ensure the vehicle/trailer is in a safe location and if the load is not safely restrained and may fall upon opening of the curtain do not attempt to open the curtain and seek advice from the Transport Office.



**European best practice guidelines on cargo securing for road transport:**

- [https://www.transportinfo.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/cargo\\_securing\\_guidelines\\_2014.pdf](https://www.transportinfo.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/cargo_securing_guidelines_2014.pdf)

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## 10 EN 12642-XL curtainsider design standard

Trailers and vehicles built to the EN 12642 XL standard can withstand a minimum of 40% of the rated payload to the side - without extra load securing - when following the manufacturer's guidance.

DVSA accept an EN 12642 XL rated vehicle/trailer keeping 50% of the rated payload to the side without any extra securing, as long as the load fills the entire load area to the front, rear and to within 80mm of the side. This is often called a 'positive fit'.



It's acceptable to fit lateral bulkheads or use packing material to fill any gaps in the load to guarantee positive fit when loading.

Using XL rated vehicles to transport diminishing or part loads is not ideal but it's still possible as long as the following are met: -

- Any gaps created by a diminishing load are blocked keeping a positive fit
- The load must be positioned up to the front bulkhead
- The rear of the load must be restrained with a net or other means to prevent rearward shift when there is space remaining at the rear of the body.
- A partial load which does not fill the load area has extra securing - this should be enough to meet the DfT rules: 50% to the side, rear and 100% to the front

For example, the use of rated lashing straps across the rear of the load must provide security for 50% of the entire load. This will secure the load in the same way as the rear of the vehicle would for a full load.

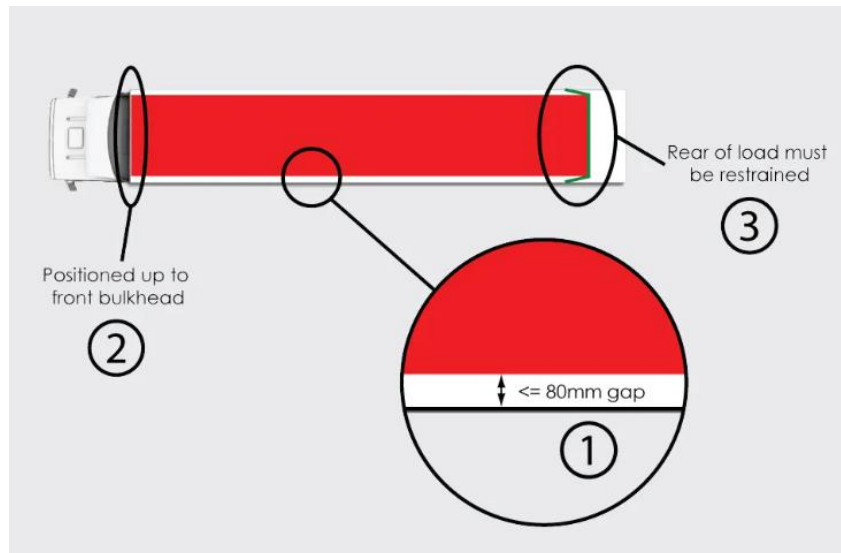
Or, the load should be secured as it would in a non-'XL' rated vehicle.

The EN 12642 XL standard refers to the entire vehicle or trailer and not just the curtains. So, reinforced curtains fitted to an ordinary trailer do not meet the XL standard. There is no such thing as an 'XL curtain'.

Even XL-rated vehicles must be treated in the same way as a normal curtain side vehicle, and other appropriate methods used to secure the load, such as lashings, should be used if the load is not a positive fit.

**Positive fit:**

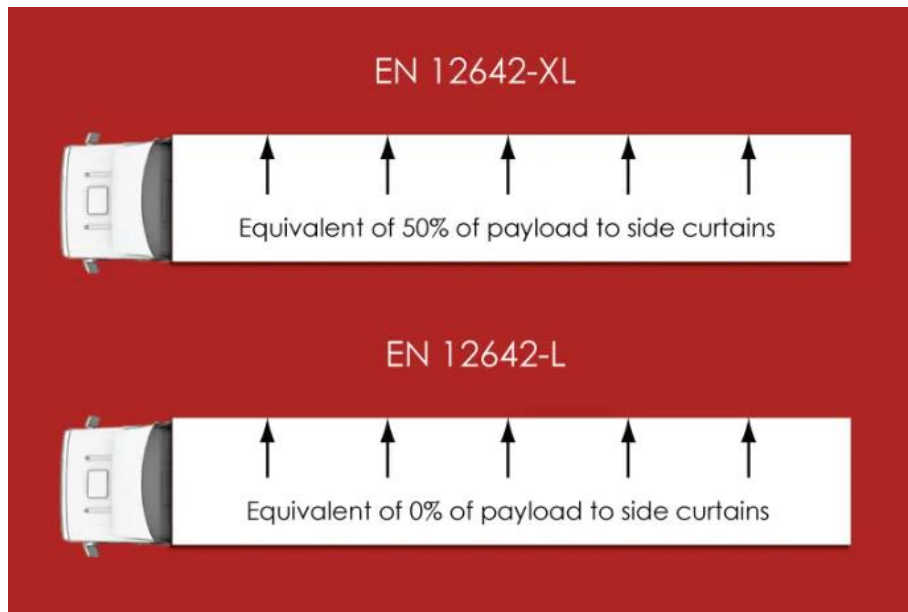
- Any gap between the load and the side curtains must not exceed 80mm.
- The load must be positioned up to the front bulkhead.
- Gaps behind the load should not exceed 300mm. If it does, as in the case of diminishing loads, the rear of the load must be restrained with a net or other means to prevent rearward shift when there is space remaining at the rear of the body.

**EN 12642-L vs EN 12642-XL**

EN 12642-XL is not to be confused with the similar, EN 12642-L. Both structures are defined in the EN 12642 standard, however the L-type does not allow a vehicle curtain(s) to retain any of the load, whereas for the XL-type a vehicle can utilise the curtain to provide a degree of load containment.

The strength of the structure can be proved by calculation, static testing or dynamic (driving) testing.



**Curtain-sided bodies - Light goods:**

You can secure goods or unstacked pallets that weigh less than 400kg per item:

- using buckle straps that hang from the roof of the body structure
- with inner curtains

Treat goods and pallets over 400kg – and stacked pallets if the combined weight of the stack is more than 400kg – as heavy goods.

**Curtain-sided bodies - Heavy goods:**

Secure heavy goods that weigh more than 400kg per item or pallet with:

- lashing
- load-rated nets
- tarpaulins with integral straps

Whatever method you use, it must be able to restrain half the weight of the load to the side and rear, and the full weight forward.

This is the minimum standard for normal road driving.

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## 11 Webbing straps and ratchets


When designing a direct restraint system and deciding the required number of restraints, it is the lashing capacity (LC) and not the breaking force which must be considered.

When designing an indirect (tie-down) restraint system, it is the standard tension force (STF), not the lashing capacity of the strap, which is relevant for the calculation of the number of straps needed.

**Lashing capacity** = *Maximum allowable tension in the strap.*

**Breaking force** = *Maximum force the web lashing withstands when tested complete with ratchet and end fittings.* The breaking force of the lashing assembly will be twice the lashing capacity.

Lashing capacity	LC.... daN
Standard hand force*	S <sub>HF</sub> 50 daN
Standard tension force	STF .... daN
Webbing material	POLYESTER
Length	...m
	"NOT FOR LIFTING"
Name of manufacturer or supplier	
Manufacturer's traceability code	CODE NR #### ##
Year of manufacture	DD MM YYYY
Standard	BS EN 12195-2



### Ratchet strap maintenance:

Check them thoroughly before using them. Any mould, weakening or discolouration indicates damage. If you find any, do not use the straps.

Don't leave the ratchet straps in a heap on the floor when finished with them – they will get damp.

Moisture causes mildew and mould. Both seriously weaken the strap. Make sure you fold the straps neatly and place them above ground in a dry area.

Too much exposure to sunlight can also cause your ratchet straps to deteriorate. So, if you notice significant colour fading, replace the old strap(s).

Be careful when using them that you do not have them rubbing against hard edges that can cut and damage the webbing.

Inspect the straps daily, or at least before using them—look for colour changes, burn marks or cuts. If found, replace the ratchet strap(s) via Workshop stores.

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### Attaching Ratchet Straps

- First, you must put the tie-down straps loose end into the ratchet's mandrel – the cylindrical round rod.
- You then pull the rest of the strap through the mandrel.
- Make the strap tight by pulling the slack through the mandrel.
- You use the ratchet to achieve the desired level of tautness.
- Take care not to tangle the strap.
- Finally, lock the handle into place when you achieve the tautness you want.

### Releasing Ratchet Straps

- Pull the trigger toward the back handle
- Opening the ratchet fully
- On release, take all the webbing out of the mandrel
- Pull the trigger to unlock, then close the ratchet back down.

Further guidance can be found at the Company SOP on ratchet straps & by viewing the link:

- [How to use ratchet Straps - YouTube](#)

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### Requirements for webbing straps

- Straps should comply with the EN12195-2 standard, identified by a label on the web strap and a classification on the ratchet.
- The strap should have a hand-operated ratchet tensioner.
- Straps should be long enough for the securing method.
- Straps should be visually inspected before every journey.
- Straps with holes, tears or fraying should be thrown away.
- The end fitting of the strap (web lashing) should be suitable for the type of lashing point used.
- For best securing performance they should be attached to suitably rated lashing points on the vehicle.
- Where no lashing points are fitted, they can be attached directly to the vehicle chassis or rave (this is not ideal as it can allow for movement & loss of tension).
- Never attach straps to rope hooks.

### Number of lashings needed

The number of lashings required can be calculated using the procedures outlined in the EN 12195-1 standard<sup>5</sup>. This will depend on the nature of the load (weight, dimensions, centre of gravity), the static friction between the load and the load bed, the securing method used (direct, indirect or a combination of both) and the rated capacity of the lashings used.

### Best practice for safe transport of palletised loads

Curtain-sided trailers are essentially flatbed trailers with a weather-protection structure mounted on the bed of the trailer. They allow goods to be transported and protected from the weather, as well as providing the advantage of easy access to the sides of the trailer for loading and unloading.

**WARNING: Do not use mechanical aids such as levers or bars, unless the tensioning device is specially designed to be used with them.**

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### Strapping of vehicle loads

In order to secure the load, drivers must consider three very important things:

- Gaps between the load and the bulkhead or headboard. It is much easier to stop an object moving than it is to stop it once it has already started to move; pallets are ideal in filling up spaces.
- Stacking of loads. Clearly when placing products on top of each other, they must be stable and they should also be secured individually, i.e. the lower level secured independently to the higher level.
- Lashing points. When loading, straps should ideally be secured to lashing points in the floor, lashing points bolted to cross bearers (under the floor), the chassis itself or body sub-frame; lorries fitted with heavy steel raves – there may be no choice but to use the side raves of the body but never use rope hooks.

Each vehicle and trailer may/will vary, so drivers and loaders must assess the vehicle or trailer to ensure they identify the best and safest anchor points to secure the load.

### Examples of fixings:



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### 12 Working at Height

Operators must always attempt to not work at height but this cannot always be carried out due to operators and loaders requiring access to the bed of the vehicle/trailer for example.

The vehicle/trailer bed must only be accessed via the vehicle/trailer steps or tail lift.

If you need to access the bed this must only be for a specific task only and once completed return to the ground.

Specific task includes:

- Securing the load so that it is safe for transport.
- Un-securing the load when unloading is taking place.
- Tiding bed if the bed is covered with waste material.

If operator is in any doubt about working at height, they must contact their line manager immediately for further advice and guidance.



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### 13 Lone Working

Operators of vehicles will have to lone work when deemed necessary by the Company.

This must be monitored by line managers and the following adhered to:

- Ensure operator always has a mobile phone on their person.
- Line/operations manager closely monitor vehicle(s) tracker for signs that route is not on schedule.
- Contact driver if vehicle does not seem on to be on schedule.
- Contact customer if on a customer site and ask them to investigate.
- Check tracker for other company vehicles within the area to respond to location to investigate.
- Dispatch manager to location & calling emergency services.

Operators must risk assess their tasks to incorporate the fact that they are working alone.

Change Record			
Issue	Date	Reason for change	Approved By
6	26/10/2023	Update regarding unloading.	P Forth
5	19/06/2023	Image of shorts company shorts added.	P Forth
4	10/03/2023	Update & review regarding wearing of shorts after trial.	P Forth
3	20/12/2022	Reviewed and SOP overhauled and updated to include EN-XL trailers & ratchet straps.	P Forth
2	20/09/2019	Reviewed no change to content	M Harrison
2	29/07/2016	Reviewed and updated with Grist Environmental branding. No change to content	P Mortimer
1	23/11/2011	Original issue	P Mortimer