



21088

Safer cab to trailer Suzie connections on artic trailers

Brett Aggregates > Transport **3**



Before



After

DESCRIPTION

A driver at Brett Aggregates had reported an injury whilst completing the Suzie connections between an artic trailer and the cab. In consultation with other drivers during the investigation of this incident, it became apparent that this was an issue that could be repeated. There were two main areas of concern.

The Suzie connections are low down on the bottom of the artic trailer, sitting within the cross members at the same height as the chassis. Significant force is needed to be manually applied to complete the connection. It was not uncommon for drivers to bend over and push force the connections together. This put them at risk of a manual handling injury.

In completing the operation, the driver is straddled across two separate foot plates between the cab and trailer. There is the potential for the driver to slip off the plates, jam a limb between the two plates or fall from the plates to the ground. The distance between the plates and the ground is 1.3m, representing a significant fall from height hazard.

A team was formed to find an engineering solution to reduce, as far as practically possible, the potential for an injury whilst making the Suzie connections. In consultation with a fabricator, a new bracket was designed and trialled successfully. This

enables the drivers to adopt a much improved steady and stable stance to exert the required force to overcome the 12-bar back pressure. Bending and twisting is no longer required to make the connections.

The driver who trialled it was happy with how well it worked and how much easier it was to make the Suzie connections at hip height as opposed to ankle height.

BENEFITS

- Risk of a fall from height much reduced
- Risk of a manual handling injury much reduced
- Risk that driver will stumble or overbalance much reduced
- Drivers and operators more likely to share and report safety concerns following this experience
- Highlighted the company's unwillingness to accept unsafe working condition
- Changeover of cabs is a swifter, simpler and safer process.

TRANSFERABILITY AND DEVELOPMENT

- Brett will implement this change on all its trailers
- This modification could be used on any HGV trailer, it is simple and cost effective to install. This innovation will be shared more widely with the industry.



Completing Suzie connection