

Snow and Ice on Commercial Vehicles

OHS information for commercial vehicle operators

Key Points:

- Snow and ice coming off commercial vehicles while in motion can be dangerous to other vehicles on the highway and can result in potential insurance claims, fines or civil litigation.
- Removal of snow and ice buildup can create additional hazards for the operator.
- Drivers need to include snow and ice removal into their routine pre-trip tasks during the winter months.
- Routinely cleaning snow from commercial vehicles can also result in a reduction of potential insurance claims, fines or civil litigation resulting from falling ice.

THE HAZARDS: What are the hazards of snow and ice on commercial vehicles?



When loose snow blows off commercial trucks and trailers there is often a temporary loss of visibility for other vehicles on the highway. When the accumulated snow melts and freezes, thick chunks of ice may form. If these pieces dislodge when the vehicle is in motion, they can create hazards for other road users.

During the winter months, snow and ice accumulation can be seen on the tops of commercial vehicles, such as straight trucks, intermodal containers, large trucks, trailers and buses. As shown above, this poses a significant safety concern for occupants of commercial and passenger vehicles on our highways.

Removing the snow and ice buildup can be hazardous for commercial vehicle operators because it involves working from heights, working in close proximity to vehicle traffic, and ascending and descending ladders, which can be slippery. These factors should be considered during the hazard assessment process, and control measures to mitigating these hazards should be put in place.

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What are the Obligations and Responsibilities of Industry?

Employers need to have clear safety policies and procedures for their workers and must provide them with proper training to do the job. Drivers need to be diligent in their vehicle inspections, and should conduct pre-use inspections of vehicles frequently.

Under the OHS Code, there are specific requirements related to working at heights above three metres. Part 9, Fall Protection, of the Alberta Occupational Health and Safety Code states worker and employer requirements for fall protection, which would apply to typical truck and trailer heights.

Furthermore, the [Traffic Safety Act](#) and its regulations are enforced by the Commercial Vehicle Enforcement Branch and law enforcement agencies. Some excerpts from the [Commercial Vehicle Safety Regulation](#) 121/2009 and the fines for contravention of these regulations is also noted below.

Cargo means all articles or material carried by a vehicle, including those used in the operation of the vehicle. This would include snow or ice.

- Failing to secure cargo - Commercial Vehicle Safety Regulation AR 121/2009, 17(4) - **(\$776.00)**
- Failing to inspect the vehicle's cargo - Commercial Vehicle Safety Regulation AR 121/2009 – **(\$310.00)**
- Careless driving - 115(1) *TRAFFIC SAFETY ACT* **(\$543.00)**

THE CONTROLS: What are Safe/Effective Practices for Snow and Ice Removal?

At some major distribution centres or other locations of concentrated commercial vehicle activity, permanent or semi-permanent devices can be found. These structures sweep or scrape snow from trailer tops as the vehicle passes through. An added consideration for these devices is the clean-up, storage and removal of the often substantial quantity of snow that is removed from the vehicles. These and similar methods of snow and ice removal can be complex, require routine maintenance, or be cost-prohibitive to a significant portion of the industry.

A method of snow removal, requiring virtually no capital investment, is to have workers or drivers climb onto a trailer roof and manually remove snow and ice by shoveling or raking the trailer roof. However, this common practice creates its own set of serious safety issues of slips and falls from trailers as well as potential damage to the trailer roofs.

Several models of portable snow removal tool are available for residential applications while others are specifically marketed toward the transportation industry. These lightweight roof rakes are portable and can have telescopic and/or flexible handles that allow safe snow removal while the operator stands at ground level. A hazard assessment, which may show a need for high visibility clothing along with other personal protective equipment, such as hard hat, etc.

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Contact Us

OHS Contact Centre

Edmonton & Surrounding area

- 780-415-8690

Throughout Alberta

- 1-866-415-8690

Deaf or hearing impaired:

- 780-427-9999 (Edmonton)
- 1-800-232-7215 (Alberta)

Website

work.alberta.ca/ohs

Get Copies of OHS Act, Regulation and Code

Alberta Queen's Printer

www.qp.gov.ab.ca

Occupational Health and Safety

work.alberta.ca/ohs-legislation

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Commercial Vehicle Enforcement

403-340-5225

<https://www.solgps.alberta.ca/>

Alberta Transportation

780-427-8901

<http://www.transportation.alberta.ca/3.htm>

Alberta Motor Transport Association

(800) 267-1003

<https://www.amta.ca/Safety/pdf/AMTADrivingTips2014.pdf>

Office of Traffic Safety

(800) 267-1003

<https://www.amta.ca/Safety/pdf/AMTADrivingTips2014.pdf>

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