

Motor Vehicle Load Restraint

It was reported that in August 2003, while railway workers were travelling to a work site in a company motor vehicle, a gas bottle was stored on the top storage deck within a utility's canopy. During heavy braking, the bottle was propelled forward smashing through the rear window of the utility's cabin. At the time, the incident was reported to local management, the company incident hotline and the OH&S committee.

In response to the incident, the infrastructure operator, directed vehicle users not to use the top deck of utilities fitted with a canopy for storage. In addition, local safety actions included placing decals in the vehicles stating: *"Nothing to be stored on top deck that may be propelled forward under heavy braking"*. A prototype barrier grill was also trialled.

The reporter advised that subsequent discussions have taken place at various levels within the organisation regarding the possibility of fitting all similar vehicles with the safety grills, however, the operator's management are not inclined to fit them, preferring for certain equipment either not be carried in vehicles or be strapped down.

The reporter does not believe that strapping the equipment down will be sufficient to prevent it becoming a projectile and due to space limitations, it may be necessary for some of the equipment being transported on the top deck.

CSIRS Requirement

The Office of Transport Safety Investigation (OTSI) sought verification of the claims from the infrastructure operator.

Operator Response

The infrastructure operator agrees with the concerns raised.

The infrastructure operator advised that in February and again in July 2004, an article highlighting the importance of proper load restraint was published in the staff newsletter.

In March 2004, the infrastructure operator sourced decals for fitment to utilities. These decals alert personnel to the limitations of using the top deck for storage.

In addition, the infrastructure operator is currently determining vehicle requirements for future fleet acquisition. These requirements shall address identified Occupational Health and Safety issues.

Safety Action

The operator advised that in regard to existing vehicles, cargo barriers for utilities fitted with canopies are currently being trialled. In addition, existing utilities are being modified to include additional tie-down rails on the top deck.

OTSI Action

OTSI has advised the reporter of the responses, actions and plans provided by the responsible operator.

Workcover and the Transport Safety Regulation division of the Independent Transport Safety and Reliability Regulator have been advised of this incident so that they can monitor the effectiveness of the safety actions undertaken and proposed by the operator.

This incident and the outcomes of the inquiries made by both OTSI and the responsible operator have been recorded in OTSI's Safety Investigations Database for future review and safety trend analysis.