

**COLLECTION OF MATERIAL FROM RECYCLING BRING SITES
(Report by the Head of Operations)**

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report reviews the report into operational procedures used at bring sites across the district produced by the Health and Safety Executive Corporate Specialist Division. The report was commissioned following a request from the Health and Safety Advisory Group that the matter be examined in detail. A copy of the report has been circulated to all members of the Group.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Over the past 10 years there have been a number of accidents and incidents involving employees emptying 1100 litre wheeled bins at recycling bring sites across the district. In line with normal practice, all such reports were reviewed and investigated in order to develop improved working practices to minimise risk.
- 2.2. A number of these injuries resulted from employees trying to move bins that were either too heavy, or positioned in such a way as to make moving them difficult. In response to these events, revised working arrangements were introduced that enabled employees faced with heavy or misaligned bins to call for assistance to move them. This system has been in place for about 2 years now.
- 2.3 There have been very few incidents since the revised arrangements were introduced and those that have occurred, did so when the revised procedure was not followed correctly.

3. INFORMATION

HSE Report

- 3.1 The report looks at the physical siting of bins at bring sites, the condition of those sites, the condition of bins and the arrangements in place for carrying out emptying. The report is very helpful, in that it confirms the observations made by our own safety professionals in their assessment of the risks associated with the particular activity.
- 3.2 In his executive summary to the report, the author concludes that
- “In my opinion, the risk of injury to operators individually handling Eurobins is high and an appropriate means of reducing the risk would be to ensure that the two operators perform the task”.

The above statement is factual and officers would not disagree with it. Using two people to undertake any task that involves significant manual effort will always be the best option if it is practical and viable.

- 3.3 As responsible employers, we have a duty under health and safety legislation and as a matter of good practice, to either eliminate, or minimise as far as is reasonably possible, the risks associated with our work activity. Where elimination of risk is not possible without a disproportionate cost that would make the activity untenable, our responsibility is to put in place measures that reduce the level of risk to acceptable levels.
- 3.4 In the case of this service; following up on the incidents that had taken place, we considered the possibility of making this operation a two person activity. Were we to do this, it would increase the revenue operating cost of the service by over £40k per annum, putting the continued provision of the service at serious risk, along with the jobs of the employees concerned.
- 3.5 As an alternative, working arrangements were devised which ensure that employees can call on assistance when faced with having to move a bin that would present a potential manual handling problem. Although these arrangements have been in place for some considerable time, their existence is not reflected in the HSE report.
- 3.6 The current arrangements, which ensure that assistance is available, are sufficiently robust as to reduce the risks associated with this task to acceptable levels.
- 3.7 A key point of the HSE report revolves around the employee's ability to assess how heavy any bin will be. As part of normal operating practice, the employees undertaking this activity are required to check how full any bin is before emptying, both to assess weight and also to assess the volume of material collected as this affects any reward paid to those providing the sites. Because of this, there is surety that a ready assessment of the volume of material contained in a bin and hence the likely weight of the bin is known before any attempt is made to move it.

4. SUMMARY

- 4.1 There are many work activities undertaken by employees within the Operations Division that involve significant risk, particularly in relation to manual handling. In managing and operating services that involve high level risks, there needs to be a balance that eliminates where possible and minimises and manages residual risk where elimination is impractical. In achieving the above, the cost of elimination measures needs to be a significant consideration in circumstances where such costs could result in the service being withdrawn altogether.

4.2 The risks associated with emptying bins at our recycling bring sites have long been recognised as being relatively high, but the remedial measures currently in place recognise those risks and provide a managed solution that enables the service to continue to be provided.

5. RECOMMENDATION

5.1 The Safety Advisory Group are requested to note the above views when considering any recommendations in respect of future staffing levels for this service activity.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

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