



# S A F E T Y B U L L E T I N

## **FORKLIFTS - ACCESS RAMPS TO ROAD HAULAGE TRUCKS**

At some minesites it is sometimes necessary for forklift trucks to be driven on to the load beds of road haulage trucks to load or unload supplies and equipment. This may be particularly the case when direct loading/unloading of containers of the type that is commonly used in shipping transport (Seatainers) is necessary.

A common access to the tray or load bed of conventional trucks is by way of a pair of light weight steel ramps. These are usually stored within the steel construction of the tray. The ramp gradient is often steep (in excess of 20°). Equipment may be approaching its limit of traction, even under ideal conditions, and drivers have been observed having difficulty controlling forklift trucks on such ramps. This problem is accentuated in wet weather or after the passage of a water cart when mud is smeared on the ramp surface as a result of the forklift travelling over unsealed lay down areas.

It is known that a range of dangerous goods are unloaded by this method. Of particular note is that bulk sodium cyanide is often delivered to minesites in Seatainers. Clearly, it is only a matter of time before a serious spill or accident occurs.

A safe system of work is essential. One suitable system currently in use incorporates "beaver back" trailers. These specialised trailers provide full width ramps with a relatively low gradient and a ramp surface which provides high traction.

The hazards indicated above are clearly foreseeable. If a transport company does not provide a trailer with a recognised safe system for forklift access, then an alternative safe system is required and this is the responsibility of the principal employer at the mine. It may be reasonable for mine operators to provide a loading/unloading facility or dock on site which will permit a near level access. The steel ramps carried by the truck could be used as a link from the truck to the dock, provided that the ramps are designed to carry the appropriate weight and are equipped with suitable guides to prevent the forklift running off the edge. Forklifts are generally not all-terrain vehicles, may be prone to rolling on their sides and should be operated on reasonably level ground.