

## **TUTB concerns on the health and safety of workers in the waste management sector: Hazards of refuse collection machinery**

### Summary

In the last decade, a number of workers have been killed while using refuse collection vehicles at work. Of these fatal events, half have involved reversing operations, with the truck backing up. Many fatalities occurred when workers fell & slipped from or were struck & run-over by the vehicle.

This memo is addressed to Trade Unions of the waste management sector: the TUTB is interested in collecting views from workers operating machinery so as to uncover possible unsafe design solutions: should it be the case, the TUTB will take appropriate actions at CEN and European Commission level.

### The issues at stake

Manually-loaded trucks for the collection of household refuse incorporating a compression mechanism – known as Refuse Collection Vehicles (RCVs) – are machines listed in Annex IV of the Machinery Directive: as such, they are considered to be higher-risk, so are subject to a strict certification procedure by a Notified Body.

The TUTB has come across RCVs-related discussions at the meeting of the Working Group on Machinery under the 98/37/EC Committee<sup>1</sup>, on March 2000.

The issue at stake was the initiative of German market surveillance authorities to impede the free circulation of some RCVs on the ground of alleged deficiencies of the standard EN 1501-1:1998 *Refuse collection vehicles and their associated lifting devices — General requirements and safety requirements — Part 1: Rear-end loaded refuse collection vehicles*. This is a C-type standard<sup>2</sup> prepared by CEN TC183/WG2 "Waste collection vehicles and associated lifting equipment" under a mandate from the European Commission to facilitate the compliance with the design requirements of the Machinery Directive 98/37/EC. The standard was published in the Official Journal on October 15<sup>th</sup> 1998: since then, compliance with such "harmonized" standard implies the presumption of conformity to the essential health and safety requirements (EHSRs) it covers<sup>3</sup>.

A number of RCVs' design aspects seem today at the center of the debate among standard developers and inspection authorities:

- The protection of operators occasionally or regularly working outside the cabin;
- Whether to require the presence of footboards in all RCVs or not;
- How to minimize – by design – mounting possibilities of operatives on RCVs bodywork;
- How to minimize hazardous standing postures of operatives;
- How to clarify the requirement for the control overriding the reversing control in an emergency;
- How to define the maximum permissible speed.

CEN has started revising EN 1501-1 at the beginning of 2003: a first amendement dealing with footboards (clause 6.6.4.3) has been recently adopted. A second amendement on electromagnetic compatibility is under preparation.

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<sup>1</sup> The TUTB is regularly invited to attend the meetings of the Working Group 98/37 to discuss practical issues about the implementation of the Machinery Directive.

<sup>2</sup> The so-called "C-type standards" cover a single type of machinery: A-type standards cover basic concept applicable to all machinery, whereas B-type standards deal with one safety aspect or one type of safeguard concerning a range of machinery.

<sup>3</sup> One of the main advantages of adhering to such standard is that manufacturers may use the risk assessment carried out by the standard developers.