

Subject: **DANGERS of OVERLOADING VEHICLES**

The Problem:

It is a legal requirement to ensure that your vehicle is being operated within its safe working design weight. An overloaded vehicle not only causes damage to roads and your vehicle, it also puts you and other road users at risk. Vehicles react differently when the maximum permitted weights which they are designed to carry are exceeded. The consequences can be fatal. Overloading puts a massive strain on vehicle tyres and makes the vehicle less stable, difficult to steer and take longer to stop. VOSA employees, Trading standards Officers and Police Officers carry out random checks at the roadside to enforce overloading regulations.

Who is responsible for my vehicle load?

Ensuring your vehicle is not overloaded is the responsibility of **you and your employer**. In addition to this, if anyone else causes, or permits, a vehicle to be overloaded, they may also be charged with committing an offence.

The Road Traffic Act 1988 requires 'vehicle users' to ensure that vehicles are not overloaded. If a vehicle is found to be overloaded, both the driver and the Operator (Bethell) can be prosecuted and fined, which could lead to a prison sentence. Bethell could also lose its 'Operator Licence' which will result in loss of business and jobs. Even worse, if your overloaded vehicle results in a fatality, you and your employer could face a prison sentence for Manslaughter or Death by Dangerous Driving.

What will happen if my vehicle is found to be overloaded?

If your vehicle is found to be overloaded by an enforcement officer, it can result in a Prohibition Notice which will prevent you from continuing your journey until the weight is corrected. This will lead to your inconvenience while the weight is re-distributed or off-loaded.

To ensure that your vehicle is not overloaded, you should:

- **Know the weight and weight limits of your vehicle** – the maximum permitted axle weight and Gross Vehicle Weight (GVW) can be found in your driver handbook or sometimes on a plate located by the bulk head or by the driver or passenger door
- **Be careful not to mix up the Gross Vehicle Weight (GVW) with the Gross Train Weight (GTW)** – the GVW is the maximum permitted weight of the vehicle (plus any load it is carrying), while the GTW is the maximum permitted weight of the vehicle plus any trailer being towed (plus any load carried in the vehicle and trailer)
- **Remember that the GVW includes the weight of the vehicle, driver, load and any passengers.** Also allow for the weights of any pallets or packing cases and anything on a roof rack e.g. a crew cab tipper, with driver and 4 hefty passengers could limit the load to be carried to 50kg (2 bags of cement)!
- **Ensure the load is distributed evenly** – after any drop-offs, re-check your load
- **Ensure the GVW is checked before setting out**
- **NEVER automatically trust declared weights** – remember you and your employer are responsible for not overloading

REMEMBER – SAFETY is EVERYONE'S RESPONSIBILITY