# H&S Situational Awareness

Setting and achieving high operational standards for the recycling and waste management sector is a strategic priority for the ESA and its members. As part of our member-led Health and Safety (H&S) programme, ESA has launched a campaign promoting greater situational awareness of common risks faced in the sector.

Each month, for the next ten months, ESA will be promoting a different area of situational awareness as follows:

1. Driving Recklessly on Pavements (DROPS)

2. Workplace Violence and Aggression

3. People in bins

4. Transporting waste manually

5. Driving for work

6. Wellness fit for work

7. Three points of contact

8. Get out and look/slow speed \*

9. Reversing\*

10. Danger zone\*

Each of these situational risk areas has a corresponding poster containing a QR code link to a short film, while the below document contains an overview, as well as appropriate messaging, for each area. (Please note the video and supporting collateral for the three risk areas marked \* are pending)

ESA members, and the wider sector, can access all of the posters, as well as team “huddle” cards, below. All of the films are now available on the [ESA’s YouTube channel](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLTqyjSfuIsDTwdJi1dw3hZsgdaE9LnvwE)

(Note: The videos and supporting poster/huddle card for the three risk areas above marked \* are still pending and will be released ASAP. This page will be updated and we will notify members)

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| **Campaign** | **Article / Statement** |
| **DROPS**      **Insert video** | **Situational Awareness – Driving recklessly on pavements (DROPs)**  This month’s ESA Situational Awareness theme is associated with ‘Diving Recklessly on Pavements’ (DROPs)  Every month, the waste sector faces thousands of incidents caused by motorists driving recklessly on pavements, which seriously threatens the safety of employees and the public.  Within the ESA, we want to raise awareness and eradicate this issue. Some waste organisations have already began using a combination of tactics, including working with the police, employee training, re-routing of vehicles, clearer hi-vis marking, and resident awareness marketing. This educational video is intended to further supplement this great work and combat the risk collectively to protect waste collection workers.  It is imperative workers report reckless driving through local near miss and hazard systems, sharing any vehicle (or other available) camera footage with local enforcement agencies to bring prosecution to the offender. This is because driving on a footway (or pavement) is an offence under section 72 of the Highways Act 1835 and is also prohibited by rule 145 of the Highway Code.  Available through the QR code is a short video clip that covers the risks associated with DROPs. Alongside this we have produced a poster to display at sites to promote this month’s theme within your organisation and a huddle card. The huddle card is a resource designed to accompany the video, giving safety leaders pointers for discussion, and encouraging your teams to share their thoughts, experiences, and opinions. |
| **Violence and Aggression** | **Situational Awareness – Workplace violence and aggression (WVA)**  This month’s ESA Situational Awareness theme is associated with **workplace violence and aggression** (WVA). We all recognise that employees have the right to work without fear of violence and aggression, however the reality is that many workers are victims of such incidents.  The Health and Safety Executive define WVA as incidents where a person is “abused, threatened or assaulted in circumstances relating to their work”. WVA can include physical, verbal, or psychological behaviours, and can have profoundly negative consequences on workers’ health and quality of life. Those affected report heightened anxiety, feeling helpless, chronic fatigue, and increased stress, among many other issues. WVA can also negatively affect those around victims, such as witnesses or the victim’s family and friends.  Research has suggested that WVA may occur more often than we think, as workers often do not report incidents when they happen. This could be for several reasons but, most notably, many workers feel that WVA is ‘just part of the job’ and have normalised such behaviours, or they may believe that nothing will come out of reporting it. Unfortunately, this means we may not know the full severity of WVA across the waste sector and the impact it is having on employees.  Looking at this research for the waste management sector, organisations have taken steps to support and engage with employees who wish to report incidents to implement preventative mechanisms to reduce WVA in the first place.  Available through the QR code is a short video clip that covers an approach to dealing with potential WVA events. The technique is referred to as ‘PALMS’ which allows employees to position themselves safely away from the confrontation, demonstrate the correct posture with a positive attitude, listen to their views, make space, and adopt a non-confrontational stance. It is always important to report the incident straight away.  Alongside this we have produced a poster to display at sites to promote this month’s theme within your organisation and a huddle card. The huddle card is a resource designed to accompany the video, giving safety leaders pointers for discussion, and encouraging your teams to share their thoughts, experiences, and opinions. | |
| **People in bins** | **Situational Awareness – People in bins**  This month’s ESA Situational Awareness theme is **people in bins**. The accompanying video is short and impactful, designed to remind our people to think twice before moving waste containers.  People taking shelter or sleeping in or around waste containers is a serious issue for our industry. Several fatalities have occurred in recent years across our sector, with significant near misses also widely recorded, whereby teams across the sector have fortunately managed to identify rough sleepers by inspecting the waste containers and looking for signs of vulnerable people in or around them. Rough sleepers are typically discovered inside closed containers during cold weather in secluded urban areas; however, people are increasingly being found sheltering in bins within towns and villages.  Unfortunately, some of the most vulnerable people in our society find themselves in this sad and difficult situation, facing not just homelessness but also mental and physical health issues, drug or alcohol problems, and potentially long histories of neglect and abuse. They could be trying to find an escape and a place to sleep in at night or rest in during the day, with the containers providing a form of warmth and shelter. No matter what part of the UK it’s in, every waste container could have a rough sleeper inside, so we must remain situationally aware to prevent any harm whatsoever during our waste collections.  We must check every large waste container by knocking on the side, giving it a good shake, and opening the lid before moving it to ensure there are no signs of life inside. Anything unusual that you do find must be reported to your line manager immediately, so they can guide you through the next appropriate action to take. If you come across a rough sleeper in a waste container, you must fill in a near miss form.  Available through the QR code is a short video clip that covers the risks associated with people in bins and what signs to look out for. Alongside this we have produced a poster to display at sites to promote the theme within your organisation and a huddle card. The huddle card is a resource designed to accompany the video, giving safety leaders pointers for discussion, and encouraging your teams to share their thoughts, experiences, and opinions. | |
| **Reversing** | **Situational Awareness – Reversing**  This month’s ESA Situational Awareness theme is associated with Reversing Vehicles.  Through the completion of route or customer risk assessments the waste sector tries its upmost to work with drivers to eliminate reversing wherever possible. However, practically there will be numerous times in a working day whereby a driver needs to perform a reversing manoeuvre.  Reversing during waste collection presents risks which are typically not present in other workplaces, often because complete control cannot be exercised over the street environment because of factors such as:   * The street layout/geography * Street furniture (parked cars, lamp posts, bollards, trees, etc.) * Other vehicles * Pedestrians – members of the public, who have an equal right to be present on the street, and may not recognise the risks or be able to take evasive action * Weather – varying weather conditions   In addition, the variety of people at risk of being struck by reversing waste vehicles is diverse, including the following:   * Loaders alongside the vehicle and reversing assistants involved with manoeuvres * Pedestrians, including: Children (who might not understand the risks), People with impaired sight / hearing or limited mobility, People wearing headphones for personal entertainment or using mobile devices such as phones/tablets, People engaged in other work activities i.e., roadside construction and other road users such as motorists, cyclists and horse riders who might un-expectantly appear during reversing operations   We must always remain situationally aware of these hazards before commencing such a manoeuvre and determine if it can be carried out safely. Whenever a trained reversing assistant is present, they should be deployed providing it is safe to do so. This campaign promotes the STOP principle. This is when a driver is unsure of their surroundings or a hazard presents itself.  Stop  Think  Observe  Proceed.  Available through the QR code is a short video clip that covers the risks associated with Reversing. Alongside this we have produced a poster to display at sites to promote this month’s theme within your organisation and a huddle card. The huddle card is a resource designed to accompany the video, giving safety leaders pointers for discussion, and encouraging your teams to share their thoughts, experiences, and opinions. | |
| **Get out, look out, slow speed** | **Situational Awareness – Get out and look, slow speed manoeuvres**  This month’s ESA Situational Awareness topic addresses the importance of performing **slow speed manoeuvres** when collecting waste, especially where the vehicle may be single manned.  It’s imperative that before manoeuvring a vehicle, all visual safety aids are clean and correctly adjusted. This will assist you with your dynamic risk assessment upon arrival to an area where a manoeuvre is required.  We should park in a safe place and exit the vehicle safely using the three points of contact to assess the area we want to enter, looking out for any current hazards and remaining aware of any other potential hazards that may be become apparent whilst performing the manoeuvre. When it is deemed safe to enter, we should move at a low speed whilst maintaining our awareness of any unexpected, developing hazards, such as a pedestrian entering the zone. If it is not deemed safe to perform the manoeuvre, then we should take the container to the vehicle, and if it is still not safe, then it needs to be reported.  Available through the QR code is a short video clip that covers the risks associated with manoeuvring vehicles and why it is important to constantly remain aware of your surroundings and perform tasks at slow speed. Alongside this we have produced a poster to display at sites to promote this month’s theme within your organisation and a huddle card. The huddle card is a resource designed to accompany the video, giving safety leaders pointers for discussion, and encouraging your teams to share their thoughts, experiences, and opinions. | |
| **Three points of contact** | **Situational Awareness – Three points of contact**  This month’s ESA Situational Awareness theme is associated with maintaining **three points of contact** when entering and exiting waste collection vehicles.  Falling or injuring yourself while entering or exiting vehicles or equipment is a common incident across the waste sector. This is based on two factors: firstly, not maintaining three points of contact and secondly, not being situationally aware of the environmental hazards around you, such as not checking for potholes, curbs, or uneven ground.  The three points of contact rule is simple. When climbing into or descending from collection vehicles, mobile plant, and any other equipment, you must always maintain contact with **one hand** and **two feet**, or **two hands** and **one foot**. If you maintain these three points of contact, you will limit your exposure to slips and falls.  There are, of course, other factors that contribute to these incidents and falls, all of which are preventable. Employees should check their footwear and gloves for anything that could cause their hand or foot to slip from the rial or step and ensure access equipment is free from any damage and inspected regularly with defects reported. Having situational awareness means we constantly observe our surroundings which may have changed quickly since we last checked. This is the first step to reducing the risk of a fall and maintaining the three points of contact will be our control to avoiding injury.  Available through the QR code is a short video clip that covers the risks associated with entering and exiting vehicle cabs without using three points of contact or being situationally aware of the environmental hazards around you. Alongside this we have produced a poster to display at sites to promote this month’s theme within your organisation and a huddle card. The huddle card is a resource designed to accompany the video, giving safety leaders pointers for discussion, and encouraging your teams to share their thoughts, experiences, and opinions. | |
| **Transporting waste manually** | **Situational Awareness – Transporting waste manually**  This month’s ESA Situational Awareness theme is **transporting waste manually**. Waste collection activities within the sector see too many health and safety (H&S) incidents occurring due to a poor perception of environmental surroundings. This can lead to poor decision-making, such as taking a route that could lead to injury, perhaps crossing a grass verge that could be uneven and slippery. The transporting waste manually video is all about empowering our collection teams to consider the safest route when collecting bags and containers, in line with their route and customer risk assessments.  Situational awareness is continuously assessing your surroundings, identifying any potential hazards which will inform your decision making on how to carry out your work safely. This is a process often referred to as dynamic risk assessment and it’s something we do unconsciously in our everyday lives when crossing roads, walking down the street, or travelling to work. We are constantly observing our surroundings to check for hazards.  A heightened level of awareness is required when transporting waste manually. Due to the nature of our work (being outdoors and with the public), we are faced with a variety of risks such as broken pavestones, potholes, and uneven surfaces that are outside of our control. Therefore, we must make a conscious effort to carefully assess the situation we’re in and decide on the safest route to the take, avoiding any hazards and reducing the risk of an incident. If you are ever in a situation where there isn’t a safe route, you should feedback through the near miss and hazard situation cards. This will help to identify a collaborative solution so the collection can take place safely.  Available through the QR code is a short video clip that covers the risks associated with transporting waste manually. Alongside this we have produced a poster to display at sites to promote this month’s theme within your organisation and a huddle card (see attached). The huddle card is a resource designed to accompany the video, giving safety leaders pointers for discussion, and encouraging your teams to share their thoughts, experiences, and opinions. | |
| **Driving for work** | **Situational Awareness – Driving for work**  This month’s ESA Situational Awareness theme is associated with **driving for work**, targeted at company car and van drivers who drive on business; however, the principles apply to all car users driving for personal or business use.  It’s very common for employees to drive for work purposes. However, statistically, driving is one of the most dangerous work activities, due to the volume of road users, daily traffic activity, environmental factors such as the weather, and the unpredictability of other road users and the public.  Many incidents occur due to poor driving behaviours, distractions, poorly maintained vehicles, and fatigue, to name a few. As most of us start driving in our late teens, it’s important to maintain our competency by re-educating ourselves how to drive safely. But it’s not all about the driver themselves; the suitability of the vehicles we use and the journey we are taking are also important factors to consider.  Available through the QR code is a short video clip that captures the risks associated with driving for work and how to manage them.  Working within the waste sector, we have additional responsibilities related to creating a sustainable environment. Therefore, understanding our impact on the environment is also essential. Therefore, the video also provides practical guidance for managers to support their employees in evaluating whether their journeys are needed in the first place.  Alongside this we have produced a poster to display at sites to promote this month’s theme within your organisation and a huddle card. The huddle card is a resource designed to accompany the video, giving safety leaders pointers for discussion, and encouraging your teams to share their thoughts, experiences, and opinions.  Policy documents is it worth having the changes to the highway code where everyone acknowledges receipt | |
| **Danger Zone** | **Situational Awareness – Danger zone (Bin-lifts)**  This month’s ESA Situational Awareness theme is associated with the ‘**danger zone**’ when operating and working with bin-lifts on the back of refuse collection vehicles.  This is targeted at users of refuse collection bin-lifters and wheeled bins used for the collection of domestic and trade waste. Wheeled refuse collection bins (both domestic ‘wheelie bins and larger sized trade waste bins) and vehicle mounted bin-lifters have been in use in the UK since the mid-1980s. Despite technological developments and collective experience with this equipment, significant numbers of serious accidents, including deaths, still occur.  The following are the most common serious accidents to waste collectors (loaders) involving bins and bin-lifters:   * Being struck by the bin, still attached to the bin-lifter, as it returns to ground level. * Being struck by a bin falling from the bin-lifter. * Becoming entangled in the bin-lifter during the tipping cycle. * Injuring yourself when releasing a waste bin ‘hung up’ on the bin-lifter or lost in the back of the hopper.   We often refer to the danger zone, which is the area in between the barrier arms or directly behind the vehicle hopper. This is where safe standing positions need to be defined for workers during the tipping cycle. There are many other precautions to take when working with bin-lifters that are captured within this month’s video, of which further information is available at the Waste Industry Safety & Health (WISH) website through information document WISH10.  Never put yourself or allow anyone else to be placed in danger, stay aware of your surroundings, and stay in control. Remember, no job is so important that we cannot take the time to do it safely.  Available through the QR code is a short video clip that covers the risks associated with the bin-lift and danger zone. Alongside this we have produced a poster to display at sites to promote this month’s theme within your organisation and a huddle card . The huddle card is a resource designed to accompany the video, giving safety leaders pointers for discussion, and encouraging your teams to share their thoughts, experiences, and opinions. | |
| **Wellness**  **(Fit for Work)** | **Situational Awareness – Fit for work**  This month’s ESA Situational Awareness topic is themed around being **fit for work**. It’s important to be fit and ready for work both mentally and physically, otherwise you could put your own safety and the people around you at risk.  Research has shown that poor wellbeing can lead to a lack of concentration and therefore the ability to carry out tasks safely. Through constantly facing life’s challenges and building our resilience both mentally and physically, we improve our coping mechanisms, so that we can come to work and be as safe as possible.  However, there will likely be times when we need some support with our own wellbeing. It is important that we become more self-aware so we can spot the signs of poor physical and mental health early. We are all responsible for our own wellbeing, so knowing where you can get support is important and will help keep you and colleagues safe.  Leaders should understand how to seek advice and support for their employees when a health condition is affecting their job. This might involve providing information on avenues for specialist support, such as through employee assistance programmes or human resources departments and supporting on workplace adjustments which could help them stay in or return to work, alongside more general work-related health advice.  Available through the QR code is a short video clip covering the ‘Five ways to wellbeing’. This is based on evidence suggesting that there are five different ways in which you can improve your mental health and wellbeing. Trying some of the techniques mentioned could help you feel more positive and able to get the most out of life. The video provides practical advice from real people within the waste sector who have seen benefits of using these steps across multiple front line and support service roles.  Alongside this we have produced a poster to display at sites to promote this month’s theme within your organisation and a huddle card. The huddle card is a resource designed to accompany the video, giving safety leaders pointers for discussion, and encouraging your teams to share their thoughts, experiences, and opinions. | |