

Safe & secure

Developments around loading bay operations are set to improve safety way beyond the bay itself and out onto the vehicles. John Challen reports

Transport managers are continuously pressed to increase efficiency and this buzz phrase seems unlikely to go away any time soon. However, despite the imperative to cut costs, health and safety – particularly in and around loading bays – remains absolutely paramount.

But is it in practice? Transdek managing director Mark Adams believes it's a mixed picture. "We find the majority of the larger companies take every precaution to ensure safety at loading bays," he says, adding that some of these operators are keen to work with his company to find new optimal approaches to loading and unloading trucks. And that's not just about the loading bays themselves.

Transdek's latest innovation – currently being trialled by two operators and due for release as we go to press – is a control system that advises multi-drop delivery drivers on the re-allocation of part loads.

The company's existing load weighing technology uses sensors to calculate the weight of roll cages loaded onto a truck and prevents the lifts elevating, should this weight be exceeded. So far, so good, but the trouble here, asserts Adams, is the load distribution.

"When loading bay operatives set the load for 75 roll cages, they don't know where the load is going in the truck, so – in a double-deck trailer – you might get 45 roll cages of beer on the top and 30 cages of breakfast cereal on the bottom."

The firm's new system – the culmination of an 18-month development programme – aims to overcome such issues, says Adams. "We have introduced computerised control into the loading process. The driver has a scanning sheet that shows where the cages have to go [for optimal weight distribution] and another that shows, in a part-load scenario, where the remaining cages need to be relocated."

Evolution, not revolution

Elsewhere, Adams admits that innovation is not so apparent and points to one of Transdek's smallest products still having the biggest impact. "Our safe working platforms only cost between £3,000 and £5,000, but they are still popular with operators that, for whatever reason, don't have sophisticated loading solutions," he explains.

These platforms, used instead of hand pallet trucks, are further improving safety and reducing workplace accidents, insists Adams. "The small pallet lifts effectively extend the



trailer, which is surrounded by safety bars for added security." Often it is the simple, cheap solutions that make that operational area significantly safer.

"Unfortunately, transport often isn't the most important part of a business – and certainly not where the money is made. So the money sometimes isn't spent there." **TE**

Scissor safety

Operating safety should be the overriding consideration for loading bay equipment – so look for it. Take Stertil Stokvis' Stoklift scissor lift tables. All these tables meet or exceed the requirements of the current edition of EN 1570 and already incorporate features suggested in the proposed standard EN 1570-1 2011. They also comply with the EC Machinery Directive and every machine is CE marked.

Standard safety features across the range include a set of three devices that immediately stops movement, if a problem is encountered. The first is a constant-pressure, dead-man control that operates if the push button is released. This is supported by a contact safety edge fitted beneath all four sides of the platform, which is activated if it meets an obstruction during lowering. And the final element of the trio is a fast-acting emergency stop button.

For added safety, the scissor lift tables include mechanical rising gate fins that operate automatically when the tables' gates are shut. These fins secure the gates and prevent them from being opened when the platform is in the wrong position. Also, an integral pipe-break valve is fitted to each cylinder to ensure slow, controlled descent of the platform, in the event of hydraulic failure.