

Robert Emanuels, the safety and maintenance manager at Commercial Logistics, shows the ease of setting up a cone zone when the safety cones are readily accessible.

Innovative bracket streamlines use of safety cones

By Heather Allen

Putting cones around a stopped vehicle is a quick and easy way to create space between a worker and passing vehicles. While cone zones are an obvious and necessary safety measure for occupations that work next to traffic all day, such as road construction workers and municipal landscapers, they also help protect workers who stop next to traffic for short periods of time.

Delivery truck drivers need to create a safe work zone when loading and unloading product, but the hassle of digging cones out of the back of a truck for what can be a relatively quick stop can deter some drivers from doing so.

Robert Emanuels, the safety and maintenance manager at Commercial Logistics, wanted to find a way to encourage more of his company's drivers to use safety

cones. Emanuels— who also serves on the board of directors for SafetyDriven (the Trucking Safety Council of BC) — discovered that it wasn't a lack of awareness that was causing the problem, but a difficulty in accessing cones.

"Some people were carrying the cones along but not using them because it wasn't user-friendly or ergonomic," explains Emanuels.

"It's one thing to tell a driver that he needs to use cones," agrees Mark Ordeman, Industry and Labour Services manager at WorkSafeBC. "But if the cones are in some inaccessible place in the trailer then it's a lot less likely that they're going to put them out. The employee will probably think: 'I'm not going to be here that long. It will be okay this time.'"

Emanuel came up with a quick and easy solution. The company mounted a simple bracket on the driver's side of each delivery truck. The 71 cm (28 in.) cones slip into the bracket in a vertical position and are easily secured with a bungee cord.

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—Robert Emanuels, safety and maintenance manager at Commercial Logistics and board member at SafetyDriven

Emanuels drew on his experience hauling fuel in Vancouver to come up with his solution. At the time, his truck had a bracket for holding cones, which were always placed around his work zone in order to prevent other vehicles from driving over product hoses.

“I’ve seen different bracket designs, but that one seemed to be the best fit because it’s the easiest to use. The driver has to walk past the cones to get to the load, and can automatically take them,” explains Emanuels. “The easier you make safety, the more likely people are to follow it.”

Both the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation and the Canada Labour Code state that employers must ensure that proper traffic control is provided whenever traffic could be hazardous to a worker. This is especially important on busy city roads and in parking lots, where clearly marked unloading zones aren’t always present. Room in parking lots can be tight. “People backing out their cars don’t see a work area,” says Emanuels. “But, there is a much better chance of not running into the railgate if they see cones.”

While a cone bracket isn’t needed for all types of trucks, it could be useful in situations where the driver needs to set up a short duration cone zone. “I believe every person should have the necessary tools to do the job safely,” says Emanuels. “By keeping workers safer, you’re setting up a culture that you are a safe company and have high standards. Everybody talks about a return on investment. Here’s a way to spend a few dollars on tools, and get back much more.”

Emanuels takes equal consideration for public safety. “We’re doing this not only for the safety of our drivers but also for the safety of third parties. We give other drivers and pedestrians something else to see to prevent incidents. It’s safer for everyone.”

“This is a great example of an employer who had a concern for safety, thought about something that was needed, and developed a cost-effective solution” says Ordeman.

Drivers are happy with the solution too. “We have a driver who goes to Whistler every day,” says Emanuels. “That’s a busy place. He says it’s just so easy now that it makes sense for him to use his cones every single time.” ☺

Cone zone = slow down

Cone zones reduce risks, but everyday drivers also need to do their part. Cone zones only work when drivers take heed of them. According to stats from WorkSafeBC, 14 workers were killed and another 226 were injured while working on or beside the road, between 2006 and 2015. If you see cones on the road:

- 1 Slow down and drive with extreme care.
- 2 Stay alert and minimize distractions.
- 3 Think about every cone as if a human being were standing behind it.

More information about roadside safety and setting up proper cone zones can be found on the Cone Zone website, created by WorkSafeBC in conjunction with the Work Zone Safety Alliance and the Justice Institute of British Columbia: conezonebc.com. For information about commercial trucking safety, visit safetydriven.ca.