

Safety Bulletin

National Parks and Wildlife Service

This is the second Safety Bulletin from the National Parks & Wildlife Service (NPWS) Division Workplace Health & Safety (WHS) Committee for 2020. This particular bulletin was produced by staff from the Limestone Coast Region. Throughout the year a different NPWS branch or region will provide a safety bulletin to keep staff updated on new workplace safety initiatives, a particular theme, or other information in regards to workplace safety.

THEME – Safe Use of Trailer Tailgate Ramps

**“Safety is vital, and improving safety to all staff is the highest priority.
Look after your workmates!”**



Photo 1- the model of trailer involved in the incident.

An incident occurred in the Limestone Coast in October 2019 where the gas strut that assists to lower and raise the tailgate ramp of the Light Utility Vehicle (LUV) trailer pictured above buckled and failed. The operator was standing behind the trailer as the tailgate was being lowered when the gas strut bowed and suddenly snapped; the operator was struck but fortunately only suffered a minor injury. This is a heavy ramp and the outcome could have been much worse.

This is a new type of trailer which was purchased for the purpose of transporting LUVs in the regions.

As part of the corrective actions, the trailers have since been fitted with an additional gas strut and a bend protection system.

Tailgate ramps have the potential to cause serious crush and manual handling injuries. The ramps may be raised or lowered with the assistance of gas struts or springs, and operators must be aware that these mechanical devices can fail and cause the ramp to drop unexpectedly.

There are three key risk management systems that relate to purchasing and operating plant and equipment such as a LUV trailer:

1. Assess hazards and risks associated with plant [Plant Safety Management Procedure](#)
2. Assess the hazards of the task [Job Safety Analysis Procedure](#)
3. Provide a method for completing work safely (Safe Work Practice) [Job Safety Analysis Procedure](#)



Photo 2- the bent and broken gas strut (left) that failed while the tailgate ramp was being lowered (right).

Prior to Purchase

Prior to committing to the purchase of any trailer (or plant) a pre-purchase risk assessment must be undertaken. The purpose of this is to attempt to identify any issues or unintended safety problems that might arise and to also ensure that the purchase will perform as is required.

There have been cases where equipment purchased has not performed to the expected standard and this step will help reduce this risk.

It also gives us the opportunity to check designs and the experience and credentials of the supplier or in this case the trailer builder qualifications and experience in building to your requirements.

The important point is that the plant will be safe and not create any unintended safety issues.

Remember also to undertake or revise any JSA and risk assessments that relate to the operation of the trailer; there may be changes that you need to make to your operating procedures.

Reminders for safe use of trailer tailgate ramps:

Training and induction

As per the [Trailer Use Safe Work Practice \(SWP\)](#), drivers must have received Basic Defensive driver training or Off Road driving training if off road driving is required. This training must include instruction on the safe use of trailers.

Pre-start inspections

As per the [DEW Safe Driving Procedure](#), Managers have a responsibility to ensure that all trailers made available for use have been regularly maintained, serviced, and safety related repairs are made in a timely manner by competent persons. Worksite Managers must ensure all trailers in their area of responsibility are included on a [Depot/Workshop/Compound Worksite Inspection](#) and that those trailers are inspected for damage and wear and tear. If any doubt exists to a trailers roadworthiness, advice from a competent person (i.e. mechanic or qualified engineer) should be sought.

Prior to using any trailer, the driver must inspect the trailer and satisfy themselves that it is in good safe order. Ensure that the pre-use inspection includes gas struts or springs for damage prior to lowering tailgate ramps.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

The [Trailer Use SWP](#) does not mandate PPE, however leather gloves and safety boots should be strongly considered when in the field and loading a trailer.



GLOVES –
leather
riggers



SAFETY BOOTS

Working with and near tailgate ramps

- When lowering the tailgate ramp ensure you are clear of the tailgate and at a safe distance. Do not stand behind where you may be struck if the tailgate fails as it lowers or raises,
- Watch the gas strut to make sure it is not bending or deforming,
- Do not lower the tailgate when the trailer is not attached to a vehicle,
- Ensure unattended vehicles and trailers are secured from uncontrolled movement; leave the vehicle in gear or park, and apply the handbrake,
- If operating or parking on a slope, consider the use of wheel chocks,
- If unfamiliar with the trailer get an induction from other staff who have used the trailer,
- Use correct manual handling techniques when lifting or lowering the tailgate,
- Look out for others and make sure they stand back when lowering/lifting,
- When raising, be ready to secure the tailgate in the upright position- have lynch pins on hand and ready to go, or even a second person to help. Ensure no one enters the zone behind the tailgate until it is secured and double check to make sure connections are securely attached.

Post use check

Please ensure gas struts are inspected regularly and replaced as required. Tag out broken or damaged equipment, and report damage so that it can be fixed.

Operators must comply with relevant DEW procedures and understand the risks associated with trailer use. Other relevant DEW Policies and Procedures include:

- [Safe Work Practice- Trailer Use- Light trailers to 4.5 Tonnes GVM](#)
- [Safe Driving Procedure \(see: Section 3.13 and Appendix C\)](#)
- [Work Health Safety and Injury Management Policy](#)

REMEMBER - SAFETY IS PARAMOUNT!