

Trailer becomes decoupled from tractor unit

HIPO Logistics SHE Alerts



what

A driver had collected his trailer with Bag In Box container from the docks and went to Ineos for loading.

On completion of final weigh, the driver drove from the weighbridge and parked in close proximity to the terminals office to collect paperwork.

When the driver attempted to move off, the trailer became uncoupled from the tractor unit. The trailer fell on its landing legs.

There was no damage to the trailer but there was damage to the right hand rear light cluster of the tractor unit and impact damage on the locking mechanism and backing plate of the fifth wheel.

This incident could have had a catastrophic outcome if the decoupling had occurred on the road.

why

The driver declared that, after coupling, he had tug tested the trailer and found that the locking arm was engaged so he believed that he had coupled correctly.

He drove 1.2 miles to the Polymer Terminal and whilst manoeuvring on the Polymer Terminal the trailer decoupled.

Investigation showed that the driver managed to couple the trailer from above rather than through the jaws of the fifth wheel. The kingpin triggered the locking mechanism, but it was left sitting in the socket on top of the locking mechanism instead of in it. This proved to be sufficient to pass the tug test but not adequate to support the loaded trailer properly.

This could only have happened when the kingpin plate and the Fifth wheel plate were not flush when the coupling was made.

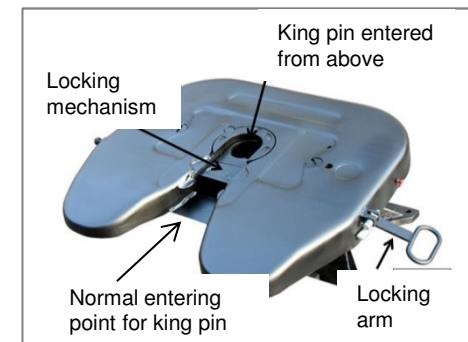
learning

Important points when coupling trailers to tractor units:

- Check, and if necessary, adjust the trailer coupling height relative to the fifth wheel which is normally designed to access the kingpin just below its parallel height.
- After the coupling is made, carry out a tug test on the trailer. This should be done twice to ensure the tractor unit is fully coupled to the trailer.
- Check whether the locking arm is in place and that the tractor unit Fifth-wheel and trailer kingpin bed plates are flush, and that there are no visual gaps between the two plates. Check that the kingpin is in position.

The haulier has added to their procedures of coupling, the requirement to carry out a visual inspection afterwards.

The driver has been re-trained.



Fifth wheel of tractor unit

Compromised safety principles

BS5 / BS 10

26

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16