
Loading Dock Vehicle Restraint Engagement Procedure

1.0 Objective & Scope

The objective of this procedure is to ensure the safe and consistent engagement of vehicle restraints at all company-operated loading docks. Proper engagement prevents trailer separation, dock walk, and premature departure, protecting dock workers, forklift operators, and drivers. This procedure applies to all fleet drivers, dock supervisors, and logistics personnel responsible for loading or unloading operations at any facility with installed vehicle restraint systems.

The lead dock supervisor or designated safety officer is responsible for verifying restraint engagement before any loading or unloading activity begins. Drivers are responsible for positioning the trailer correctly and remaining in the cab until the restraint is fully engaged and the dock light indicates safe access.

2.0 Required Equipment & Tools

- Vehicle restraint system (e.g., manual wheel chock, automatic dock lock, or hydraulic barrier) – verify model-specific operating manual is available on-site.
- Dock leveler with integrated restraint control panel (if applicable).
- Red/green communication light system (dock-side and driver-side indicators).
- Two-way radio or hand signals for communication between dock worker and driver.
- High-visibility vest, steel-toed boots, and hard hat for all personnel in the dock area.
- Mobile tablet or clipboard with SiteQueue application for digital sign-off and photo documentation.
- Safety cones or barriers to cordon off the dock area during non-operation.

3.0 Site Safety & Hazard Assessment

- High-visibility vest and steel-toed boots are mandatory for all personnel within 3 metres of the loading dock edge.
- Conduct a pre-operation visual inspection of the restraint system for damage, corrosion, or obstruction. Do not use if any component is cracked, bent, or missing.
- Ensure the dock area is clear of debris, oil spills, or standing water that could cause slips or interfere with restraint engagement.
- Verify that the trailer's rear impact guard (ICC bar) is intact and free of damage. Do not engage restraint on a damaged or modified ICC bar.
- Confirm that the driver has set the parking brake and placed wheel chocks on the rear axle before approaching the dock.
- Never walk behind a backing trailer. Use a spotter and maintain eye contact with the driver until the trailer is fully stopped.
- In wet or icy conditions, increase following distance and allow extra stopping time for the trailer.

4.0 Step-by-Step Execution Procedure

1. The driver backs the trailer into the dock bay until the rear bumper makes light contact with the dock bumpers. The driver then sets the parking brake, turns off the engine, and remains in the cab with the hazard lights on.

2. The dock worker approaches the trailer from the side, staying clear of the rear. They visually confirm the trailer is centred in the bay and the ICC bar is aligned with the restraint mechanism.
3. The dock worker places two wheel chocks behind the rear axle of the trailer (one on each side) as a secondary safety measure.
4. The dock worker activates the vehicle restraint system according to the manufacturer's instructions. For automatic systems, press and hold the engage button until the restraint arm rises and locks against the ICC bar. For manual systems, pull the lever or crank to raise the barrier.
5. The dock worker visually inspects the restraint to confirm it is fully engaged and making solid contact with the ICC bar. The restraint must not be resting on a weld, bolt, or other protrusion.
6. The dock worker checks the communication light system. The dock-side light should turn green (or display a safe symbol) and the driver-side light should turn red (or display a stop symbol), indicating it is safe to approach the dock and unsafe to drive away.
7. The dock worker signals the driver (via hand signal or two-way radio) that the restraint is engaged. The driver turns off the hazard lights and exits the cab, proceeding to the designated waiting area.
8. The dock worker opens the trailer doors and secures them with door hooks or straps. They then position the dock leveler and begin loading or unloading operations.
9. Upon completion of loading/unloading, the dock worker closes and secures the trailer doors. They then signal the driver to return to the cab.
10. The dock worker removes the wheel chocks and disengages the vehicle restraint system by pressing the release button or pulling the release lever. They confirm the restraint arm has fully retracted and the communication lights have returned to neutral (both sides red or off).
11. The dock worker signals the driver that it is safe to depart. The driver starts the engine, releases the parking brake, and pulls away slowly, checking mirrors for any obstructions.
12. The dock worker logs the engagement and disengagement times, trailer number, and any anomalies in SiteQueue, attaching photos of the restraint engagement and the dock area.

5.0 Verification, Sign-off & Reporting

1. Immediately after disengagement, the dock worker performs a final visual inspection of the restraint system and dock area to ensure no damage occurred during the operation.
2. The dock worker completes the digital checklist in SiteQueue, confirming that the restraint was engaged before loading/unloading and disengaged only after the trailer doors were secured.
3. The driver signs the digital log via SiteQueue to acknowledge that the restraint was properly engaged and disengaged, and that they were notified at each stage.
4. If any damage, malfunction, or near-miss occurred, the dock worker submits a safety incident report in SiteQueue and notifies the site supervisor immediately.
5. The shift supervisor reviews the completed logs at the end of each shift and signs off in SiteQueue to close the ticket.

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