

# Fact Sheet

## MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC SLEEPING IN FRONT END LOAD (FEL) BINS

**Recent incidents in New Zealand and overseas have highlighted the risk to members of the public of sleeping in FEL bins. The United Kingdom has reported 11 fatal incidents in the last five years related to this issue.**

People are placing themselves at serious risk of harm by sleeping, foraging or seeking refuge in FEL bins. If a person remains undiscovered during the collection and tipping of a FEL bin into a refuse collection vehicle, the risk of serious or fatal injury is high.

The biggest risks are associated with 1.5, 3.0 and 4.5 cubic metre FEL recycling and refuse bins. However there is also a risk with rear load vehicles when servicing 660 and 1100 litre containers.



Preventing people from sleeping in a FEL bin is difficult, and to hear them over the noise generated by the truck is equally challenging. Drivers should keep their eyes and ears open in case there is a person in a FEL bin when the bin is lifted and emptied.

Simple measures can help those who manage areas where FEL bins are stored and those who collect FEL bins to reduce the risk of people being able to get into large bins.

Precautions are dependent on how foreseeable it is that people could gain access to the FEL bins and how likely they are to be found.

### What does the law say?

The Health and Safety at Work Act 2015 places a duty on a Person Conducting a Business or Undertaking (PCBU) to, so far as is reasonably practicable, ensure the health and safety of workers (and other persons) from work being carried out as part of the conduct of the business or undertaking.

The Act places a shared duty on the collection company and the customer who has hired the FEL bin and placed it on their site. There is therefore a need for the two parties to work together on developing suitable controls to manage this risk.

### Risk assessment

It is highly recommended that PCBUs who enter into an arrangement with a supplier to supply bin services and collect FEL bins, conduct a risk assessment, which should address people accessing these bins when stored in public areas. This assessment should identify the hazards/risks, determine controls, which might include site security arrangements and the placement of bins where there is full time public access. These situations are not all the same, so controls may be different at individual locations.

The following questions may assist in identifying risk when undertaking this process to determine the likelihood of people getting into the bins:

#### The bin storage area

- Is the bin in an area that is quiet and isolated?
- Is the area dark and unlit? This could be an issue for drivers servicing during hours of darkness.
- Is the bin out in the open and unsecured, permitting easy access to the bin?

#### The bin

- Is the lid unsecured and easy to open?
- Does the bin have large openings that are easy to get through?
- Is the bin stored for long periods, unemptied and undisturbed?
- Is the bin lid able to be accessed easily or can other items be climbed on to access the lid?
- Does the bin contain dry, comfortable waste? Paper, card, textile and other similar dry wastes are more likely to attract those seeking shelter than mixed, residual or wet waste.

**IF A PERSON REMAINS UNDISCOVERED DURING THE COLLECTION AND TIPPING OF A FEL BIN INTO A REFUSE COLLECTION VEHICLE, THE RISK OF SERIOUS OR FATAL INJURY IS HIGH**

## The environment

- Is the bin being placed in an area where there are rough sleepers or alcohol and substance abusers?
- Are there known instances of people being found in the bins or in the storage area?
- Is it a wet or cold time of the year? (People are more likely to seek shelter, and for longer periods, in these conditions.)

## Methods of control

### Minimise

1. Place bins in a secure compound or building to isolate the bins from the public.
2. Provide bins with locking bars; a standard company padlock or suggest the customer provides a padlock.



### Administrative

1. Inform relevant workers involved in FEL bin use/storage and servicing of the risk of people getting into the bins and the actions required to prevent/minimise. Include the importance of checking open and unlocked bins.
2. Use danger signage.



3. Empty the bin in such a way that may shake or bump it to alert anyone inside the bin that something is happening.
4. Visually check inside bins located in high risk areas.
5. Avoid pushing FEL bins forward because an individual may be sleeping between the FEL bins and the wall.
6. Look for evidence that someone may be in the FEL bin if it needs to be rolled out to the truck.

7. Minimise unnecessary cab noise so that calls for help can be heard and wait a few seconds after dumping the load before packing.

## Reference Material

- Health and Safety at Work Act 2015
- Health and Safety at Work (General Risk and Workplace Management) Regulations 2015
- [www.hse.gov.uk/waste/faqs.htm#recycling-bins](http://www.hse.gov.uk/waste/faqs.htm#recycling-bins)
- WasteMINZ Health and Safety Guidelines: for the Solid Waste and Resource Recovery Sector (2014)

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