

Thumbs-up for safer working

We rely on heavy machinery to help us carry out our daily work. Whether you work on a construction or an operational site, it's highly likely there will be big pieces of kit operating nearby.

Being struck or trapped by operational mobile machinery is the second biggest killer in the construction industry, claiming three lives last year. This statistic is shocking – if you are hit by a construction vehicle, it's unlikely you'll be injured – you'll probably be killed.

It's a sad and grim truth that's affecting not just our industry. In the last five years, there were a further nine fatalities in the recycling sector. We want to do whatever we can to make sure that everyone working with us doesn't fall foul of the deadly hazards we all work with every day.

While there may be improvements in technology and equipment out there to keep us safe, we need to start with the basics and change our behaviour. We need everyone to take a few minutes to give the **thumbs-up** to our new four-step way of working.



Step 1 – Get in the zone

Think about your own workspace. There are a number of zones of influence and each deserves special planning to understand the risks. All work must be planned to make sure it's to be undertaken safely, no matter how big or small the job may be. **Identify** who is authorised to be in the work area and **make sure** protective measures are in place.

The safety zone – the area where we can prevent harm to others by creating a safe working space, clearly separate from the hazardous zone and the rest of the site

The hazardous zone - the working area with the highest risk, where the 'work' is being done and the chance of harm is greatest

Separate the different zones and understand who should be there and if you need to be there. Never enter without permission from the person in charge.

Step 2 - Give your thumbs-up to safer working

The '**thumbs-up**' is a universal symbol that something is OK. It crosses all languages and can be understood over the loudest of noises – that's why fighter pilots use it before they take off, and that's exactly why we want to adopt it in our world.

The rules are simple –

- Understand the different working zones from a safe distance
- Always approach with extreme care and get the plant operator's attention
- Only give your **thumbs-up** to ask if it's safe or tell someone it's safe
It's all about call and response - put your thumbs up to ask, and wait for the **thumbs-up** before you move

Step 3 – Be aware of changing environments

If anything changes to the plan or method for a particular task, **stop, reassess** the risks and **adapt** your plan before giving the thumbs-up to carry on with the activity.

Step 4 – Zero compromise

We all have the power to stop any unsafe act.

If you see that someone is carrying out a task in an unsafe manner, do the right thing and prevent someone from harm, before it's too late.

Spread the word

We have produced a range of posters which can be used around our construction sites. Make sure everyone who comes to site understands what we really mean by giving the **thumbs-up** at the gate.

Test it for yourself

Why not set up a safe area on site to carry out the role reversal exercise?

It doesn't matter what piece of plant you use – dumper, mini-digger or crane. What is important is to appreciate the size of the plant and the confines on site that it has to work in.

There is no fixed agenda here – if you are using a digger, extend the boom in a controlled manner and appreciate the size of the swing zone. With the engine turned off allow the workforce into the cab to get the driver's view. Approach the machine from different directions and appreciate the blind spots.

Take photos and use them as discussion points with your teams.