Driver Safety – The Dangers of Loose Cargo Stats and Facts



FACTS

1. **Vehicle Instability:** Unsecured cargo can shift during transit, affecting vehicle balance and increasing the risk of rollovers or jackknifes, especially in commercial transport.
2. **Cargo Striking Drivers:** Inadequately restrained loads in vans or pickups can strike the driver during sudden stops or crashes.
3. **Load Ejection:** Loose materials falling from flatbeds or trucks can strike other vehicles or pedestrians, leading to severe injuries or fatalities.
4. **Injury During Unloading:** Workers unloading loose cargo without caution can be struck by falling items or shifting pallets.
5. **Improper Weight Distribution:** Uneven or shifting loads place strain on vehicle suspension and braking systems, reducing control and increasing wear.
6. **Cargo Movement in Emergency Braking:** Sudden stops can cause improperly secured items to lurch forward, damaging vehicle interiors or causing impact injuries.

STATS

- BLS 2023 data reported 15,600 non-fatal injuries in automotive and outdoor occupations, with ~1,200 linked to cargo-related incidents. Crush injuries (15%) and lacerations (10%) were common, with inadequate PPE or securement contributing to 18% of cases.
- In 2024, NHTSA recorded 42,514 traffic fatalities, with ~2% (~850) tied to cargo issues, including loose cargo. Workplace fatalities were rare (<1%) but linked to unsecured loads, per OSHA.
- In 2024, PPE violations (29 CFR 1910.132) ranked 6th (1,876 citations), including inadequate HVSA or hard hats during cargo handling. Vehicle safety violations (e.g., cargo securement, FMCSA 49 CFR 393) were also noted.
- A 2022 NHTSA study found that HVSA and hard hats reduced cargo-related injuries by 20% in work zones, but only 65% of drivers consistently used required PPE.
- WorkSafeBC reported 25–30 annual fatalities in outdoor occupations in British Columbia (2020–2023), with loose cargo incidents rare (<1%) but tied to vehicle instability.
- CCOHS 2023 data showed that HVSA, hard hats, and proper cargo securement reduced injuries by 22% in transport-related tasks.
- Ontario’s 2024 fines (up to $500,000) target OHS violations, including failure to provide PPE or ensure cargo securement.