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Dur-A-Guard promotes the safety benefits of truck side guards

Lightweight safety barriers help haulers prevent injuries to pedestrians, the company says.

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Edited by Adam Redling



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Side-impact collisions between pedestrians and municipal work trucks can be some of the most dangerous. This includes accidents that occur with sanitation vehicles, **Dur-A-Guard**, a Union, New Jersey-based manufacturer of truck side guards says.

“During a crash with a truck that has high ground clearance, vulnerable road users can fall into the exposed space between the front and rear wheels and suffer fatal crushing injuries,” the **U.S. Department of Transportation’s Volpe Center** noted in a 2016 report. “Nearly half of bicyclists and more than one-quarter of pedestrians killed by a large truck first impact the side of a truck.”

Fortunately, there is a solution that is already saving lives, according to Dur-A-Guard. By installing truck side guards that physically block pedestrians and cyclists from being swept underneath the vehicle’s rear wheels, municipalities and private fleets are protecting citizens, reducing liability and even potentially reducing insurance costs.

Already mandated in certain metro areas in the U.S., these safety barriers made from aluminum or steel can easily be retrofitted onto existing trucks or incorporated into new vehicle fleets.

This approach has already proven to be effective in reducing fatalities.

According to Volpe, following a national side guard mandate in the United Kingdom, cyclist fatalities fell 61 percent and pedestrian fatalities by 20 percent in side impact collisions with trucks. Side guards have been required since the 1980s in the European Union and Japan, and more recently in China, Brazil and Peru.

“Side guards protect bicyclists and pedestrians against falling under a moving truck and being run over,” David Biderman, executive director and CEO of **Solid Waste Association of North America (SWANA)**, Silver Spring, Maryland, says.

“Hauling companies and municipal sanitation departments that operate in congested cities should seriously consider adding them.”

Although there is no federal mandate in the U.S. yet, Volpe has set recommended national standards as a growing number of municipalities such as Boston, Orlando, Seattle, San Francisco, New York City and Washington, D.C. utilize truck side guards.

Volpe’s recommended truck side guard standard states that Class 3 or above vehicles with a gross vehicle weight rating of 10,000 pounds or more should have underride protection. The standard includes dimensional and strength specifications for the side guards, including the ability to withstand 440 pounds of force.

Reducing risk

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Large trucks and buses have more difficulty making turns and seeing blind spots than smaller vehicles due to their size, length and driver elevation above street level. This can increase the risk of collision in populated urban areas.

“Commercial trucks of all kinds need more room to turn right because right rear wheels often turn tighter than the front wheels, which is an added risk,” Biderman says. “Side guards can offer important protection against

tight right turns if a cyclist or pedestrian is in the mirror’s blind spot on the truck’s right side.”

Biderman added that another danger occurs as pedestrians become increasingly distracted, often texting, using smartphones or listening to music via earbuds. This can make them less aware of their surroundings and more prone to have an accident.

“Adding side guards can also be an effective way of preventing distracted pedestrians from getting seriously injured or worse if they step into the path of a moving truck,” Biderman says.

One of the nation’s highest profile uses of truck side guards occurs in New York City, which is requiring the safety barrier on 10,000 vehicles by 2024 as part of its Vision Zero Action Plan for ending traffic deaths and injuries.

To comply with the program, [Action Carting Environmental Services](#), a Teaneck, New Jersey-based provider of non-hazardous waste management services for New York City and New Jersey chose to retrofit its fleet of trucks with side guards.

“We have retrofitted about 60 trucks with side guards from Dur-A-Guard, which is Vision Zero- and Volpe-compliant,” Ken Levine, former corporate safety director at Action Carting, says. “Using side guards is one of the most cost-effective ways of reducing crash severity with cyclists, motorcyclists and pedestrians on busy city streets. It is an inexpensive way to avoid a potentially catastrophic situation.”

According to Levine, Dur-A-Guard worked with him to accommodate the various makes, models and configurations of his fleet.

“They custom fit the side guards with all of our trucks, even those with tanks, toolboxes, sidewalls and bodywork,” Levine says.

Such side guards do not need to be permanently welded onto trucks. To ease installation and maintenance, companies like Dur-A-Guard offer side guards that lift up or swing down on hinges to offer access beneath the truck. Another high-density, aluminum design is lightweight enough to be removed by one person.

“We looked into the swing-up, swing-down-type side guards, which could help provide access under the truck, but liked the removable ones better,” says Levine. “One person can easily pull off the removable guards for maintenance and then put them back on.”

According to Biderman, while it makes sense to have some uniformity to the side guards, the problem is there are many truck chassis used in the solid waste industry.

“Even one company with 10 trucks will have very different makes and models so it becomes challenging to provide a single-sized side guard that works across an entire company’s fleet,” says Biderman.

Since Dur-A-Guard has adapted the safety barriers to a full range of vehicle variations, however, the company says it has created a universal design that accommodates most trucks.

“Anyone involved with truck safety should look into side guards,” says Levine. “Those with a universal design would be helpful to cities or municipalities.”

Levine sums up the key point for municipalities: “Truck side guards save lives. If you can save a life, what price tag can you put on that?”

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