

Raising the Bar for Safety

By Sue Dickens

Hazmasters, a national safety company, has raised the bar in safety, literally, for those in the transportation industry who work on top of trucks.

Total Restraint Access Module Safety System (TRAM), developed by safety experts at Standfast Enterprises in Australia, has already garnered two awards. One from the European trailer show in Belgium last November, and the second at The National Truck Equipment Association Show two weeks ago in Baltimore, in the Most Innovative category for New Products for the trucking industry.

Nick from Standfast was in Canada when we spoke to him. He was meeting with Hazmasters President Randy Myers, at the Pickering office. Hazmasters is the Canadian distributor of the TRAM, and Nick was meeting with the sales team at Hazmasters to talk sales and marketing strategies for this unique new safety product.

"Hazmasters have trained specialists in fall protection," says Randy. We have focused on this safety issue partly due to a personal experience where a family member fell in the workplace four years ago, suffering long term injuries with compensation claim yet to be settled. Our point is there is no need to have falls in the first place. Educated workers using the right safety equipment don't fall. It takes years to get and train a good driver . . . and a fall will take all that away," says Randy.

"Prior to Tram there was no good solution for the tanker industry. Many loading facilities have fall protection, but once the truck is on the road making deliveries etc., that is when drivers are at risk," says Randy.

"Drivers slip or could simply become dizzy when on top of a tanker, so fall arrest is necessary. Most tankers have no safety system to prevent falls. A few trucks have a single cable they attach to, but few drivers ever use, and the problem is they don't meet regulations, so when a fall occurs driver will actually hit the

ground, wearing this safety gear" This false sense of safety could be fatal. Installing rail systems along the top looks good, but does not stop falls. Only Tram will prevent falls," says Randy.

Using the TRAM lightweight back support restraint belt attached to the TRAM bar allows the driver to make the transition from ladder to tank top, and move along top so they can work safely without fear of falling.

The TRAM can easily be retrofitted on any existing tanker, or static tank and can be easily incorporated into OEM designs for new tankers. Quick installation taking just a few hours to install completely keeps the truck on the road and drivers safe. It has been ruggedly designed to cope with a full range of corrosive and hazardous materials, durable to provide the highest level of reliability. It is also lightweight averaging 50 to 60 kg. Extra weight means more fuel costs, and the TRAM is only ½ the weight of rail systems.

Fernandez Engineering, who has extensive experience in the mechanical engineering field, having designed and supervised the manufacture of many mechanical products, with special emphasis on height safety applications, has certified the TRAM Safety System. The system has been designed to meet National and International standards.

"The laws regarding fall protection already exist, but it is a matter of enforcement. The new "Bill C-45" became law April 1, 2004. When there is a fatality, owners, managers, supervisors and directors can be personally charged under the criminal Code of Canada. This is in addition to fines and long term penalties that the Ministry of Labour will enforce."

"Preventing tanker drivers from falling requires a well designed safety system, and drivers who use the system. One of the safety features of TRAM is when the system is in place, the driver pretty well has to use it to get onto the truck," says Randy, giving management comfort knowing they do everything

possible to keep a worker safe.

"Hazmasters also offer complete training on all fall arrest systems, a good safety plan includes training your workers to understand the safety system" adds Randy.

"That is why we are very excited to work with Hazmasters, because they are safety professionals," says Nick.

Daily, drivers climb 4 meters off the ground on top of tankers without a safety system- this is a high-risk operation. Falls will happen, and cold winters only add to the risk with ice, snow, and wind increasing the chance of a fall for the Canadian driver" he adds.

"In Australia TRAM has been a big hit for the tanker fleets, and as we see it TRAM will be successful in Canada too. We have some of the biggest fleets in Australia endorsing the product as they have experienced a reduction in injuries due to falls," says Nick.

TRAM was developed when Ian Gillespie, a director at Standfast, was acting General Manager of a large tanker fleet in Australia. He recognized falls were a big issue for tanker fleets, so he set out to evaluate current fall protection devices for tankers. Ian asked the Standfast engineering specialists to focus on solving this serious safety issue. Two years later, the TRAM system was designed and rated to 600 kg, giving the

driver the protection needed. "Without a complete safety system like TRAM, accidents from falls will continue to happen, and statistics prove it," says Nick.

"Statistics indicate that 97% of all deaths from falls were situations in which there was no fall protection. Basically, if you use a proven fall protection system properly, you will live."

"Prior to this North American trip we researched the Internet for falls off tankers in North America, and found 30 fatalities in the past five years, and this list is incomplete as many regions don't produce this detailed information" says Nick.

The TRAM Safety System fits extremely well into Hazmasters philosophy of supplying complete safety systems, and complements our other safety products for the trucking industry such as "Deck Mate", a folding portable ladder for getting up and

down off vans, reefers and flat beds, explains Jan Beattie, a Hazmasters safety specialist.

See the TRAM Safety System at the Truck World 2004 show, booth #216, or visit Hazmasters website: www.hazmasters.com and view TRAM video under New Products or call us at 1-800-434-7065.

About falls in Ontario:

Each year there are 17,000 lost time injuries due to falls in the workplace.

1 in 5 lost time injuries results from falls.

80 workers are injured every day because of a fall, that's 1 every 20 minutes.

The estimated actual cost to a company for a fall is \$59,000, according to WSIB,

Get more information from WSIB web site (www.wsib.on.ca)

