

## POWERCHOCK VEHICLE RESTRAINTS KEEPING KUEHNE+NAGEL TRUCKS AT A STANDSTILL

"The way Powerchock works is visually very obvious. It is not rocket science and this gives you the confidence that it is going to do its job" says Stefaan Henderieckx, Senior Operations Manager at Kuehne+Nagel's new European distribution centre in the town of Tessenderlo in the Flanders region of Belgium.



**Stefaan Henderieckx**  
Senior Operations manager



*Kuehne+Nagel's logistics site in Tessenderlo, in the Flanders region of Belgium, that has 67 loading docks secured with the lockable restraint system POWERCHOCK 7.*

Stefaan Henderieckx knows a thing or two about logistics. He has spent the past 23 years with global logistics leader Kuehne+Nagel and is currently the Senior Operations Manager at the company's gleaming new European distribution centre in the town of Tessenderlo in the Flanders region of Belgium.

During this time, the logistics industry has seen its share of safety incidents particularly in dock areas. It's here that vehicles are loaded and unloaded and by their very nature these can be extremely unpredictable and perilous places. Constantly moving vehicles, heavy and unwieldy loads, height differences, combustion fumes, often unfamiliar personnel and the sheer volume of traffic are just some of the dangers. Add to these the constant time pressures, communication failures and the vagaries of weather, and you can easily see why the loading dock is one of the most dangerous areas in the workplace.

As part of his role, Stefaan is responsible for loading-area safety at the new Tessenderlo 75,000m<sup>2</sup> warehousing facility which, with more than eighty continuously operating

docking stations, is an important assignment. Two of the biggest hazards in such a hectic environment relate to 'trailer creep' and 'unscheduled departure', which are amongst the most common and most serious causes of major accidents in the warehousing and logistics sectors.

GMR Safety talks to Stefaan about the steps Kuehne+Nagel has taken at the Tessenderlo distribution hub to minimise the risks relating to sudden and unintentional movement of trailers during the loading and unloading process.

**GMR Safety:** Some estimates say that as much as a quarter off all factory and warehouse accidents occur in loading bay areas with a disproportionately high number of fatalities and serious injuries. You mentioned that until recently you were experiencing near-miss accidents. Can you tell us more?

**Stefaan:** Yes, it happened that a truck departed prematurely during loading or unloading but, fortunately, without major consequences.



**GMR Safety:** Can you tell us how you came about adopting the GMR Safety's Powerchock vehicle restraint system at Tessengerlo for preventing these dangerous early vehicle departures?

**Stefaan:** Safety is always at the forefront of our corporate ethos and we were seeking a proven and reliable solution for preventing trucks from unexpectedly departing or moving from the dock during the loading and unloading process, because of the danger this presents to personnel.

We came across Powerchock through your local sales engineer and it was he who actually suggested the **Powerchock wheel chocking system as a technically-superior mechanism that would meet our specific needs.** And at the same time we learned that this specific **trailer restraint system was already being successfully used by some of our colleagues at Kuehne+Nagel France.** So we were quickly convinced that the Powerchock trailer restraints would allow a safer interaction between people and trucks in our loading areas.



*The lockable POWERCHOCK 7 vehicle restraint can be equipped with an optional trolley.*

**GMR Safety:** We understand that, before you adopted Powerchock wheel chocks, your method of disabling the standing trucks was simply to ask the truck to surrender his keys. Was this effective?

**Stefaan:** Let me first say that at our big logistics hub in nearby Geel we have invested in another wheel chocking system which is connected to a traffic-light system. However, such a system does not physically prevent a truck from being driven away. As a result we were still getting frequent 'near misses' due to driver error. Because of this we introduced new procedures that required the driver to always be out of his cab and in the warehouse during loading/unloading and to hand over his vehicle keys to the loading personnel. In that way we could be 200% sure that the truck can't leave the gate. The problem with this approach is that with evolving technology many vehicles have keys that operate remotely or even no longer have physical keys. This means that a further step was required to make sure that if the gate is open the truck could not be moved.

Then we found the Powerchock vehicle restraint system which prevents both premature drive-away and equally dangerous 'trailer creep' which are two of the most common and most serious causes of major accidents in the warehousing and logistics sectors.

**GMR Safety:** So, are we right in saying your decision to use Powerchock safety equipment was because it is not only a warning device but it goes a step further by providing a highly secure vehicle restraint that can't be circumvented?

**Stefaan:** Yes, indeed. During the system appraisal, we were provided with a demonstration tester to see how well the product works in practice. But our colleagues in France, who are already using the Powerchock trailer restraint system, were very complimentary and when asked if they would specify the same system if they were planning a new facility, they gave a definite thumbs-up. So we didn't need to do very extensive testing before reaching a decision. It also helped that **the way Powerchock works is visually very obvious.** It is not rocket science and this gives you the confidence that it is going to do its job.

**GMR Safety:** Around 350 employees are working at Tessengerlo, now that the expansion is completed. Can you give us some idea of what percentage of these employees are involved in the physical work relating to goods in and out at the loading bays?

**Stefaan:** I would say that of the total workforce around 10 – 20% will be employed at, or have a link with, the docking and door operations. **That's a lot of people at risk and emphasizes the importance of having the most secure and reliable safety equipment for loading dock operations.**

**GMR Safety:** For sure. The truck/dock interface represents the biggest safety challenge for warehouse managers with every year many serious and fatal workplace transport accidents taking place right across Europe. What legislation is currently in place in Belgium to encourage greater workplace safety?

**Stefaan:** There are strict health and safety laws in place throughout Europe as a result of EU policy relating to worker welfare and protection. However since these regulations stem from the EU Occupational safety and health (OSH) Framework Directive this means that the way they are interpreted, enacted and enforced varies widely from country to country. Essentially, employers must avoid all worker risk as far as possible and assess and mitigate any unavoidable risks. Here in Belgium much of the compliance pressure for this comes from the official Wellbeing at Work inspectorate that conducts periodic facility inspections typically on 6- or 12-month cycle. At these Health & Safety audits any infringements are identified and suggestions for improvement made in a follow-up report.



The truck restraint system POWERCHOCK 7 is locked on the restraining plate that is anchored to the ground.

**GMR Safety:** With so many of your staff being connected to the dock operations in some way, what sort of reaction you are getting from them about the new safety system?

**Stefaan:** They're very positive of course about the improved protection from the new equipment. However, our initial installations are of the portable version of the Powerchock wheel chocks which, although performing well, are not as fast to deploy as the version with the articulated steel arm. Drivers much prefer the speed and very low effort required to use counterbalanced arm version and for this reason we have decided to use this type for the other phase of 27 docks we brought on stream.

**GMR Safety:** That's a good point. And this brings us on to the question of cost and value. You mentioned that you calculate return on investment (ROI) to be in the region of just two years. Can you give us your thoughts about the upfront price of Powerchock wheel restraints versus its long-term cost of use?

**Stefaan:** It can be very difficult to arrive at an accurate return-on-investment figure especially when you are talking about equipment for safety purposes. But in this case, the time and effort involved in the management of the truck securing and key handling was a measurable process and one which, when compared to our standard Powerchock procedure across all the trucks we receive annually, showed that **the new system would pay for itself in around 24 months**. Mind you this figure applies to the way we are operating here.

**GMR Safety:** Apart from the performance of the vehicle restraint, its savings and its safety performance, were there any other things that were important to you?

**Stefaan:** Of course, one of the major attractions is the 5-year guarantee which comes with the product. But, **for me, the biggest advantage is in the ease-of use for the driver**. It is this that makes sure the system always gets used. This is important because it is impossible to put a value on a human life and we have a duty to make sure that our facilities are as safe as possible for all people.

**GMR Safety:** We would now like to ask about your experience with the team here at GMR Safety. How did you find the service and support you received?

**Stefaan:** One of the things I particularly liked was that your sales engineer, did not simply attempt to sell us what he had to offer. He fully understood our needs and we were sure that he was only recommending the best solution. Secondly, he provided absolutely everything we needed in terms of information and support to help us make a decision and he was willing to organise any demonstrations and site visits that we wanted.

We would like to thank Stefaan for sharing his thoughts and experiences about PowerChock loading dock vehicle restraints and the safety benefits that he has gained at Kuehne+Nagel warehousing facility in Tessenderlo.



The POWERCHOCK 7 wheel chock is fixed on a trolley for the driver to handle it with ease.

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