



**Construction and Maintenance
Health, Safety and Wellbeing Briefing**

July 2019



Spotlight on New Technology

Portable Variable Message Signs

The site team identified the hazard of right hand merging from works exits into lane three and the increased risk of road accidents presented by HGVs due to the speed and density of the traffic. It was decided to use a Portable Variable Message Sign (pVMS) within the central reserve, to warn the public that works traffic is merging from the right.



The pVMS is positioned in advance of the works exit. Works traffic exiting the site pass sensors mounted on a pair of Alert Towers (one each side of the works lane). This triggers the pVMS located within the central reserve 200 yards beforehand and flashes up a message "Works Traffic Merging From Right", warning road users that a vehicle is exiting the works to re-join the carriageway.

This allows the pVMS to automatically set the sign, rather than having to manually set it, each time a vehicle wishes to exit the works.

The Benefits

- ✓ Increasing the safety, visibility and information of works vehicles re-joining the main carriageway from the right.
- ✓ Fully compliant to Chapter 8
- ✓ Fully compliant to RIS-1530-PLT & RIS 1710-PLT

Quattro Variable Message Signs

BMJV at the M27 & M62 have trialled and now introduced an additional control measure to those already required and set out by **Highways England Raising the Bar No.7** and **HSE GS6**.

The Benefits

- ✓ Increases awareness to all construction vehicle and plant users within the construction environment of the danger when approaching overhead hazards (day and night)
- ✓ The VMS units are vehicle activated signs and as such they are fitted with radar. This is optional but increases battery life/ efficiency

The site team have introduced high



definition quattro variable message signs that activate when construction plant and vehicles approach an overhead service and or hazard.

The VMS units are small and portable. Therefore, they can be positioned where appropriate as they are fixed to a post on its own battery box

Blue Star Focus

The following Blue Star has been issued in the period for Excellence/Innovation in Health and Safety: -



The RTMC contracts have recently introduced a new piece of equipment to increase the safety of the engineers whilst climbing the gantry ladders on

Highways England's Motorway & All-Purpose trunk road network.

The equipment comprises of a telescopic pole that is used to attach a temporary anchor point for a fall arrest system on the gantry ladders. This system means the engineers will no longer have to employ a clip & climb technique whilst accessing the gantries. This will improve the safety of the engineers as the clip & climb method introduced additional hazards including fatigue.

The system is low cost and could be used with other applications where a temporary safe system of access is required

The Benefits

- ✓ Reduction in fatigue as less time is spent on the ladder
- ✓ Ease of opening the gates and reduced risk of harness being caught up on the gate
- ✓ Both hands are free to enable three points of contact whilst climbing

COSHH Changes to Respirable Crystalline Silica Notation

Background

In response to the amendment of the EU 2004/37/EC Carcinogens Directive in January this year, the HSE are expected to give RCS the "Carc" notation in EH40. Consequently, there will be a greater requirement to control exposure to RCS. Exposure must be controlled "As Low As Reasonably Practicable". That means that any technology that is readily available elsewhere in any sector must be used to reduce the risk of exposure to ALL employees and others who may be exposed.

This picture to the right (The grain of sugar)

demonstrates the maximum (approximately) dust which workers can be exposed to daily – but this does not mean it is safe!



What do we need to do?

All tools MUST have on tool extraction or wet suppression systems AND the operator MUST wear RPE with a minimum Assumed Protection Factor (APF) of 20 (such as FFP3 or P3 masks) and these masks MUST be fit tested.

Additional Information

FFP3 or P3 masks should only be worn tasks up to one hour. For longer duration activities, powered RPE must be used – powered loose fitting RPE can be used for those with facial hair.

This is not necessarily new advice but as the HSE have been after this

notation for quite some time, it would be reasonable to expect a great deal more interest in levels of compliance – possibly even additional site visits from inspectors.

Spotlight on Health and Wellbeing

Protecting the eyes from sun exposure

Employers are generally well aware of the need to protect their employees' eyes from hazardous substances and flying objects, but there is a threat to eyesight that is far more prevalent in almost all employees' lives – the sun. Ultraviolet (UV) rays emitted by the sun can cause short- and long-term eye damage including cataracts and age-related macular degeneration.

The eyes are just as vulnerable as the skin to damage from the sun. Excessive exposure to the sun can cause a painful sunburn-like inflammation of the cornea at the front of the eye. This can greatly increase the risk of developing more serious, even sight-threatening, conditions in the future.

The sun's damaging power is increased by glare, which occurs when UV rays are intensified as they reflect off shiny surfaces such as glass. It is important to protect the eyes from the sun while working and driving, as well as when relaxing outside of working hours.

Dangers from the sun can be reduced by polarised lenses, which use a layer of iodine crystals to absorb the glare. Non-polarised sunglasses will only have a minimal effect, even though they will reduce the amount of visible light. Cheap sunglasses may cause the pupil to dilate, actually increasing the amount of UV light filtering into the eyes. High-quality sunglasses will also

protect the delicate skin surrounding the eyes.

Role of employers



Sunglasses may not be the first thought for employers regarding PPE, but they are a valid requirement for many employees who work outside or drive. Employers are able to protect the eyesight of their employees and sunglasses do not need to be expensive.

Check sunglasses comply with BSEN 1836: 1997, or bear the CE kite mark and are marked UV 400

Dark sunglasses do not necessarily provide more UV protection

Polarised lenses decrease the amount of glare, which can dazzle and strain vision. This can be particularly important for those with working roles requiring high levels of concentration

The larger the lens, the more protection they will give the eyes as there is less chance that light will filter in through the sides.

World Environment Day 2019

Wildflower Seed Giveaway

Highways England has a biodiversity key performance indicator to improve biodiversity. In support of this, the **M62 J10-12 Smart Motorway** project environmental team used **World Environment Day 2019** to raise awareness regarding biodiversity and Air quality by offering wildflower seed packets to staff and the supply chain.

Environmental performance on the scheme has also been exemplary to date so we thought it was also an opportunity to give something back to everyone working on the project. There is little opportunity to enhance biodiversity as part of the scheme, so this project will help to enhance biodiversity off-site and leave a positive legacy for all those working on the scheme.

Wildflower seed was purchased from Landlife Wildflowers and recycled envelopes filled with enough seed to sow an area of a typical home garden (2-4m²). The project purchased seed that contained a minimum of 30% wildflower and staff had the opportunity to take more seed based on their available garden space.

A link to the sowing and care instructions was printed on the front of all the envelopes for ease of use and to ensure successful growth of wildflowers in the future.



A toolbox talk style briefing was delivered to the supply chain workforce on biodiversity and they also could take home some wildflower seed. An offer was also made to any staff who wanted to take additional seeds for local community groups they are involved with.

Requests for extra seeds included school gardening clubs, scout projects and golf course enhancements.

Warning Issued to Drivers Using Hay Fever Medication

A warning has been issued urging drivers taking hay fever medication to be aware of the possible effects these drugs can have on their driving.

The warning comes from road safety and breakdown organisation GEM Motoring Assist, as rising pollen counts mark the start of hay fever season.

GEM road safety officer Neil Worth, said: "Some medicines, including those used to treat hay fever, can have an effect on your ability to drive safely. They could make you tired, dizzy or groggy, and they can compromise your vision and reaction time. That's why it's so important to check with your GP or pharmacist, and to read any warnings contained on the labels of the medicines you plan to take.

The same road traffic laws apply to therapeutic drugs as to illicit substances, so if your driving is impaired and you cause a collision, you risk prosecution and the loss of your licence.

According to research, one in 25 drivers with hay fever admits to having an accident as a result of driving after taking medication to fight their allergies.

A safety checklist has also been created for drivers using hay fever medication:

- Ask your doctor or pharmacist if a medicine could affect your ability to drive. Be particularly careful if you are using a medicine for the first time.
- If you do experience potentially dangerous side effects from a medicine, don't drive. Organise a taxi or a lift from a friend if you need to travel.
- If you find a medicine is making you sleepy, consider asking if there is a non-sedating alternative available.
- It's not just prescription medicines that can cause drowsiness and other potentially dangerous side-effects. So, check with your pharmacist if you plan to use an over-the-counter drug.
- **If you're unsure about the warning given on the medicine you're using, ask your doctor or pharmacist to explain any risks before you drive anywhere.**



HSE publishes annual workplace fatality figures

The HSE has released its annual figures for [work-related fatal injuries for 2018/19](#), in addition to the number of people known to have died from the asbestos-related cancer, [mesothelioma](#), in 2017.

The provisional annual data for work-related fatal injuries revealed that 147 workers were fatally injured between April 2018 and March 2019. The statistics suggest that there has been a long-term reduction in the number of fatalities since 1981. Although 2018/19 saw an increase of six workplace fatalities from 2017/18, the number has remained broadly level in recent years, comments the [HSE](#).

The three most common causes of fatal injuries continue to be:

- workers falling from height (40)
- being struck by a moving vehicle (30)
- being struck by a moving object (16)

These account for nearly 60% of fatal injuries in 2018/19.

The new figures continued to highlight the risks to older workers; 25% of fatal injuries in 2018/19 were to workers aged 60 or over, even though such workers made up only around 10% of the workforce.

In addition, there were also 92 members of the public fatally injured in incidents connected to work in 2018/2019, approximately a third of which took place on railways.



Update from the Supply Chain HUB meeting

The HUB community members are continuing to work on the website and are now live on social media.

Please see the following links for latest updates;

<http://www.highwaysafetyhub.com/>

<https://twitter.com/highwaysafety2>

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/safety-hub-964b02178/>



Highways England Safety Alerts issued since the last briefing:-

- Hei 100 Slipform Auger Incident
- Hei 099 Lyme Disease Incident
- Hei 097 Site Security
- Hei 096 Attachments to Lighting Columns
- Hei 095 Crack Identified in MS4 Mounting Bracket
- Hei 094 Bomag Roller Drum Incident
- Hei 093 Verge Strimming Activities
- Hei 092 Giant Hogweed
- Hei 091 Crane Alert
- Hei 090 Update to our Incident Reporting System Airsweb
- Hei 089 Lighting column falling from lorry loader
- Hei 088 Varioguard Foot Injury
- Hei 087 Reinforced Concrete Wall

These and previous alerts are available through the following link:
<http://www.highwayssafetyhub.com/alerts.htm>

