

# Safety Alert

## Loading of Winter Maintenance Vehicles

10 December 2019

### Background information

As we enter the busiest period of the Winter Maintenance season there is an opportunity to remind gritter drivers and loaders of the importance of correctly loading the vehicles and clearing off excess material from grids and vertical surfaces before commencing treatment routes.

It has previously been noticed at some depots that when the Winter Maintenance Fleet is loaded in preparation for a treatment salt is being left heaped up above the vehicles grids. In addition, there have been occasions where customers have complained of their vehicles being struck by larger pieces of salt falling from our gritting vehicles.



### Considerations

- When loading vehicles, operators need to take additional care to ensure the salt is distributed evenly along the hopper to minimise heaping.
- Drivers need to ensure that any salt left heaped above the grid is removed by the use of long handled rakes before leaving the depot. It is very important that this includes any larger pieces of crusted salt that have failed to fall through the grid or have come to rest on other parts of the vehicle.
- Vehicles carrying an unrestrained load pose a safety risk to drivers and other staff involved in loading and unloading operations. On the road they pose a danger to other road users and the public at large. An unrestrained load can significantly increase the risk of the vehicle rolling over or spilling its load.
- The Road Traffic Act 1991 states that: "A person is also guilty of using a vehicle in a dangerous condition if he uses, or causes or permits another to use, a vehicle on a road when the purpose for which it is used or the weight position or distribution of its load, or in a manner in which it is secured is such that the vehicle involves a danger of injury to any person." This means that both the driver and operator of the vehicle could be liable in the event of an insecure load. The penalties will depend on the seriousness of the incident, but could include penalty points, endorsement, heavy fines and the possibility of prison sentences.
- Any driver or anyone else allowing vehicles to leave depots in such a manner may also be subject to their employer's relevant disciplinary process.
- Should there be insufficient clearing equipment at the depot (such as long handled rakes) please report this to your supervisor.