

Safety Alert

Tensioned VRS- potential for injury if persons not competent to dismantle

14 June 2021

Background information

In May, following a Road Traffic Collision (RTC), a Highways England Asset Incident Watchman (AIW) arrived on scene to find the Vehicle Restraint System (VRS) had been dismantled by a vehicle recovery operator. This had been undertaken to aid the recovery of a 3rd party HGV that had collided with and damaged the VRS. No injury occurred, however there was the potential for serious injury as the section of VRS dismantled was a tensioned corrugated beam type, meaning by design it is post-tensioned. Tensioned VRS contains stored energy and must only be dismantled by competent and trained persons.

In late 2019 a Kier operative working on damaged VRS in Area 3 sustained significant bruising, when they were struck by a VRS barrier that had an unexpected release of stored energy.



Lessons Learnt

- VRS should only be worked on by a trained competent member of the service provider's VRS team, with a suitable safe system of work.
- Emergency services have been given advice on how to dismantle tensioned VRS in a life and death scenario.
- Please continue to report safety observations, near misses and incidents.
- Share this bulletin with relevant teams, suppliers and vehicle recovery operators.
- Challenge / report unauthorised VRS alterations when and where safe to do so.