

A Reminder from our Traffic Officers

There is a message below from our Highways England Traffic Officer service who have done some rapid analysis about RTCs and breaches of rolling road-blocks this month. The message is about lower traffic levels and consequent higher vehicle speeds, which combine with wintry conditions to increase risks to workers on the ground.

Please take this as a reminder (as if one were ever needed) to be vigilant and keep safe. And to continue to report incursions to the police.



***** All to Note *** more entries relating to the standard of driving from the public, incursions, breached block including one where a car drove on the grass to avoid a closure, from PSPG we have seen 85 RTCs in the 1st half of the month with w/c 11th January 2021 particularly high. Traffic flow is down now @ -34% although this is still some way off the heights of lockdown one it is significant enough to allow higher speeds and added to the wintry conditions does not make good bed fellows. Therefore my ask is to please brief all your teams of the requirement to be extra vigilant and the importance of standing in a place of safety, can you also remind everyone the need to complete the incursion forms and get support from our Police colleagues.**

Newts Emerging in Warmer Weather

Recent temperature fluctuations are causing species to emerge from their dormant winter state. Several cases of active newts being found on project sites have been reported.

Over the winter, newts become dormant but when faced by a spell of warmer weather above 5°C at night, they may emerge and look for food. These temperature conditions have occurred in several places across the UK earlier than normally expected.



Both active Smooth Newts and Great Crested Newts (GCN) have been spotted.

GCN are protected under UK Law. It is an offence to disturb, take, injure or kill any GCN (including eggs and tadpoles) or damage, obstruct or destroy the places they use for shelter or protection. A licence from [Natural England](#), [Natural Resources Wales](#) or [NatureScot](#) may be obtained to undertake essential works.

High risk activities include; site clearance; vegetation cutting or clearance; drainage works; work in troughs, trenches or open excavations; or constructing new physical barriers (such as roads – temporary & permanent).

GCN breed in ponds but spend most of their time on land (up to 1 km from the breeding pond). They also move between ponds. The route they take, often referred to as a 'corridor', forms an important part of their habitat.

Adult GCN are up to 19cm long, black or dark brown with a bright orange belly with black spots. They are nocturnal and enjoy moist, warm conditions. The [Woodland Trust](#) have a good newt identifier, but if you have any doubt, consult an ecologist.

When completing works, ensure you have up to date ecological surveys and all method statements are followed.

Regularly inspect newt / animal fences where present and check excavations, trenches and troughs before starting work. Ensure all staff are briefed when working in high risk areas or undertaking high risk activities.

If you have any concerns or discover newts or any other unexpected species, **stop work and seek advice from an ecologist** or your local environmental advisor/team. Do not handle or move the species without confirmation from an ecologist.

Check the [Protected Species Wildlife Calendar](#) for information about wider protected species.

Source: National Grid

Five Ways to Avoid Lockdown Eye Strain

Millions of people are using screens more than ever before. Many who are working or studying from home are staring at laptops and other devices all day. Most schoolchildren currently have no other way of accessing classes.

For some, the new ways of working are taking a toll on their eyes. Itchiness, blurry vision and headaches - or eye strain - are among the common problems.

The 20 20 20 Rule

"Relaxing the muscles in and around your eyes is crucial," says Daniel Hardiman-McCartney, clinical adviser to the College of Optometrists. It's simple to do. Every 20 minutes, just look at something at least 20ft away, that's about six metres, for 20 seconds. It stops your eye muscles getting overworked.



Lockdowns have made that more likely as remote workers and students follow up daytime hours in front of a laptop with screen-based leisure in the evenings. Commuting, or the walk home from school, gave people time to relax their eyes without them realising it. Now, for millions of people, that's gone too.

Think Blinking

"Blinking is really important". The eyelids work like windshield wipers, they clear away dust and dirt and wash the surface of the eye with tear fluid. Blinking also clears stagnant fluid and sharpens your vision by keeping the cornea, or surface layer of your eye, moist without that moisture, the cornea becomes dry and the vision blurry.



The problem is that we blink less often when we read from a screen, according to many studies. **Some researchers** also suggest that more of our blinks are incomplete when using a screen, with the upper and lower eyelids failing to fully connect. That can leave your eyes itchy, dry and infection-prone. So stop working on your screen every once in a while - and close your eyes completely.

Sort Out Your Screen

Experts say your screen should be about an arm's length, or 40 to 75cm from your face. Getting the distance right is particularly tricky with laptops which are often too close to the user's eyes. If the screen is too close, you risk continually overworking your eye muscles. If it's too far away you'll struggle to see small details.

Position your screen so that it is side on, or facing away from the window. That way you can minimise glare or reflection from sunlight on the screen.

Computer screens should be set up at, or slightly below, eye level. Looking up towards a screen can cause more dry eye and fatigue symptoms. Looking up, or too far down, may also give you shoulder and neck problems.

Bigger Text

People should really think about adjusting the font size, it's not a good idea to work on a smartphone or a tablet for long periods because the text is too small. There is no ideal size that suits everyone - you should find a font size that's most comfortable for you for sustained reading.

Taking regular screen breaks is essential it gives your eyes a chance to look into the distance and blink. Regular short breaks are better than fewer longer breaks.

Get Outdoors

Getting outdoors for a break is a great way of relieving pressure on your eyes, as well as helping with your all-round physical and mental health. That's obviously difficult during lockdown, especially for people who don't have access to a private garden or balcony. But research suggests that it may be doubly important for children.

Eye strain from heavy screen use in adults can be extremely unpleasant, but it doesn't lead to permanent damage. In children, however, there is some evidence that heavy screen use and insufficient time outdoors can lead to myopia or permanent short-sightedness.

Experts say the problem for children could be too much screen work or too little time outdoors, or a combination of both.

It's not clear exactly how being outdoors helps your eyes. It might just be that you tend to relax them more when you're outdoors by spending more time looking at objects further away. The impact of sunlight on the growth of the eye may also be a factor.

The full article can be found here: [Covid-19: Five ways to avoid lockdown eye strain - BBC News](#)



Stamp It Out – End Roadworker Abuse

Staffordshire County Council along with highways partner Amey have revealed how last year in the county there were **764** incidents involving abuse of workers being reported. These included incidents where drivers either entered roadwork safety zones through cones, threw objects, spat at or verbally abused highways operatives.



Now the local authority has branded the abuse as 'unacceptable' and reminded drivers how engineers are working to keep the roads safe.

One recent incident being used to highlight the issue involved gully operatives who were cleaning the drainage gullies at the time. With the tanker stationary, whilst the operatives worked to clear the gully, the driver of the vehicle immediately behind pressed the car horn continuously. After one of the operatives signalled to the driver behind that the works would only take a minute, the driver got out of the car and approached him, becoming very abusive and threatening, which resulted in the operative being shoved and his mobile phone dropping to the ground while he attempted to call the Police.

David Williams, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport at Staffordshire County Council said: "Our highways crews have an important job to do in maintaining our 6,000km plus of roads and making sure they are safe for people to use.

Crews work in all weathers and often in difficult and challenging conditions, whether it be carrying out repairs on running roads or helping to keep roads clear of snow and ice during the winter. "The abuse of our crews, whether it's verbal or physical is totally unacceptable and whilst it's only a small number of people who choose to behave this way, we want to let people know we won't stand for it."

Richard Harris, Amey Account Director for Staffordshire, said: "Abuse towards our highways operatives is experienced unfortunately by many, who wrongly now accept it as an occupational hazard. Many of the instances that have been reported are caused by drivers who are frustrated or angry by delayed roadworks who go on to spit at, verbally abuse and deliberately breach traffic management safety zones, putting the lives of our operatives at risk.

"We appreciate that there are frustrations when people's journeys are impacted by road works, but it is not acceptable that our workers are abused for doing their job. With the support of Staffordshire County Council, we are hoping to raise the awareness of these issues and promote the Stamp it Out campaign, whilst also encouraging members of the public that encounter our workforce to treat them with respect."

Commenting on incidents on the county's roads, Chief Inspector Mat Derrick, of Staffordshire Police, said: "When works are being carried out on our roads, motorists must adhere to the controls and measures put in place for the safety of workers and themselves. Ignoring a traffic regulation order is an offence and depending on the circumstances of the incident, the driver could face prosecution for dangerous driving or driving without due care.

"It is unacceptable to drive into safety zones and to furthermore verbally abuse people who are working on our road network. We will investigate such incidents and take the necessary enforcement action to send out a clear message that such behaviour on Staffordshire's roads will not be tolerated."

A national campaign, 'Stamp it Out' to highlight and stop abuse of highways workers has been launched by Safer Highways.

Operative struck by a tool – Medical treatment injury

A recent incident has highlighted the importance of inspecting tools throughout the course of the day. The employees were reinstating a fence which had been cut to allow plant access to the area. The fence was being tensioned using specialist fence pullers. The tool works by every time the handle is ratcheted the jaws move further down the chain links. Whilst at full tension and waiting for his colleague to join the wires together the jaws slipped due to a build-up of mud on the chain causing the handle to spring back and strike the operative on his safety glasses and lower forehead.



The operative's safety glasses prevented an injury to his eye however the strike did cause a cut to the forehead requiring surgical glue to seal the wound.

Key Learning:

- Ensure the tool you are using is the correct tool for job.
- Carry out a pre-use inspection on all tools and ensure they are as clean and dry as possible and continue to check them throughout the day.
- Consider the forces or 'tension' associated with this installation & assure you have a suitable exclusion zone.
- Keep yourself out of the "Line of Fire".



DO YOU KNOW THE DIFFERENCE?

WHAT IS CARDIAC ARREST?



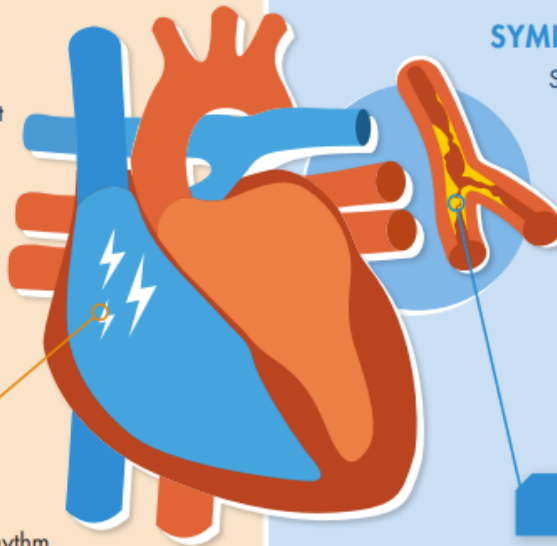
Cardiac arrest occurs when an electrical malfunction of the heart causes it to suddenly stop beating.

SYMPTOMS

Symptoms of cardiac arrest come on very suddenly. A victim of cardiac arrest will collapse and lose consciousness. Victims have no pulse and will be gasping or not be breathing. Without treatment, death can occur within minutes. Cardiac arrest victims should be connected to an automated external defibrillator (AED) as soon as possible.

Electrical Malfunction

An AED can analyse a person's heart rhythm to determine whether an electrical shock is needed to defibrillate the heart. Some rhythms do not require a shock, but in all cases, the rescuer should perform cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR).



WHAT IS A HEART ATTACK?



A heart attack occurs when blood flow to the heart is impeded due to a blocked artery.

SYMPTOMS

Symptoms of a heart attack can vary, sometimes coming on suddenly and sometimes starting slowly and persisting for hours, days, or weeks. They can include pain or discomfort in the chest, back, or jaw; shortness of breath; cold sweats; and/or nausea and vomiting. Unlike with cardiac arrest, the heart does not usually stop beating.

Blocked Artery

If the artery is not unblocked quickly, the section of the heart not receiving oxygen-rich blood because of the blockage begins to die. The longer a person goes without treatment, the greater the damage can be.

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP?



CALL FOR HELP

Contact emergency services immediately.



PERFORM HIGH-QUALITY CPR

Push hard and fast on the chest to help move blood through the heart into the rest of the body. Aim for 100–120 compressions per minute with a depth of 5–6 cm.



USE AN AED

If it's available, and administer a shock if necessary. If no AED is available, continue CPR until emergency medical services arrive.



CALL FOR HELP

Contact emergency services immediately.



CHEW AND SWALLOW ASPIRIN

If they are not allergic, tell the person who may be having a heart attack to chew and swallow aspirin.



START CPR IF THE PERSON BECOMES UNCONSCIOUS

Pushing hard and fast on the chest to help move blood through the heart into the rest of the body.

Blue Star awards etc. index listing



Introduction

- **A database (index listing) of Blue Star awards and H&S Toolkit ideas has been produced onto an Excel File, providing links to each document (internet connection required).**
- Although containing messages that cover Blue Star awards and H&S Toolkit ideas, for ease of reference the database is referred to hereafter as a **“Blue Star awards etc. index listing”**.
- The 1st issue, dated Jan 2021, contains 85no. Blue Star awards (including 2 duplicated entries) and 19no. H&S Toolkit ideas.

Purpose

- **The Blue Star awards etc. index listing is aimed at providing a reference library (database) for all documents produced, with an ability to search for entries of a similar type, including by date (year / month), subject matter, Raising the Bar number, and originator / originator references.**

How to access

- The latest “Blue Star awards etc. index listing”, has been posted on the Highways safety hub web site, nested in the H&S Toolkit tab page; <http://www.highwaysafetyhub.com/toolkit.html>
- It can be used by opening the Excel File copy held on the web site, or by opening after saving a copy onto your own PC.
- To access individual documents from the links in column “F”, users will need internet access – All documents have been uploaded onto the index listing from a Google Drive account.
- A PowerPoint Presentation that provides a summary listing of Blue Star awards, together with a selection of examples, is also available, nested in the same H&S Toolkit Tile page

How it works

- Open the Excel File and go to the “Index listing” Tab page. When 1st used, the Excel File will open on this Tab page.
- By using the filter keys across the top line, topics can be selected by using one or a multiple of filters contained for columns “D & E, and G to K” inclusive.
- Then just click on the link available in column “F” to open each required document.
- Please remember: To access individual documents, users will need internet access.

Future updates

- The “Blue Star awards etc. index listing” is to be updated periodically, with subsequent revisions posted onto the Highways safety hub web site, at which time the previous version will be removed.

Blue Star awards presentations

- In addition to the Blue Star awards etc. index listing (as above), and as a further assist with content of the Blue Star awards raised to-date, a series of 5no. PowerPoint presentations have been produced, one each to cover the following topic headings:
 - Blue Star awards P1, Selected ideas
 - Blue Star awards P2, PPI (Plant person interface)
 - Blue Star awards P3, OH&BS (Overhead and buried services)
 - Blue Star awards P4, TM (Traffic management)
 - Blue Star awards P5, Training

The Blue Star awards etc. index listing and PowerPoint presentations are posted on the Highways Safety Hub web site, under the Tile heading “H&S Toolkit”

Raising the Bar Checklist

This will help check compliance with the guidance by highlighting significant elements. A link is posted below that will direct you to the Highways Safety Hub website where there are also a lot of interesting items. Also consider joining the Twitter group which gives out lots of useful information regarding changes and uploads including the latest safety alerts.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/health-and-safety-for-major-road-schemes-raising-the-bar-initiative>