



Safety Alert

Use of reconstruction photographs

5 October 2021

Background information

National Highways and their Supply Chain partners must issue safety alerts within a strict timeframe when safety-related incidents occur on site. Occasionally safety alerts often include photographs of an aspect of the incident taken during a reconstruction of part (or all) of the incident.

Concerns

The reconstruction of an incident could lead to further exposure to the same hazards and the same type of injury / accident reoccurring or a new incident taking place. The risk of this occurring is increased if the photograph is needed urgently to assimilate the incident scenario again with it being hastily reconstructed and as a result the risk assessment not being adequate.

When reconstruction photographs have been used in the past this has, in some instances, led to an assumption that the recreation was the same as the original situation, and therefore such photographs could inadvertently influence how an incident is portrayed by those receiving the safety alert.

Advice should be given to those producing safety alerts that incidents should not be recreated, either in part or in full, to obtaining photographs as they are not essential in alerting people of an incident. The questions below must be considered ahead of setting up a reconstruction of an incident or event:

- Is there an image which was taken at the time of the incident which could be used?
- Is an image essential in explaining the incident?
- Can a drawing, diagram or sketch be used instead of a photograph?
- Can a stock photograph or a photograph from an earlier event be used?

Summary

The reconstruction of an incident to take photographs increases the risk of the same accident / injury occurring and therefore should not be encouraged or undertaken.

Whilst inclusion of a photo in a safety alert does add value and context, we should not expose our people to additional risks to obtain them.

A diagram, sketch or drawing should be used to illustrate the issue as an alternative to a photograph taken from a reconstruction of the incident.

Where a decision is made that the use a photograph from a reconstructed incident scenario is necessary, this must only be undertaken once a full safety risk assessment has been completed.