

Safety Alert

Wet Rot - Critical structural defect

27 April 2026

Background information

A comprehensive structural inspection was undertaken at the Highways Depot Salt Storage Facility at Pytchley on 23 March 2026.

The inspection has identified Critical Structural defects. The primary load bearing LVL (Laminated Veneer Lumber) portal frame columns, specifically those bearing directly onto concrete plinths without proper isolation, have suffered catastrophic structural failure due to advanced wet rot.

The inspection revealed that the effective structural cross-section at the base of several key columns has been reduced by an estimated 70-80%. The hygroscopic nature of the stored road salt has exacerbated this decay.

The loss of section at the column bases significantly compromises the building's ability to resist wind and snow loading. There is a foreseeable risk of partial or progressive collapse under adverse weather conditions or accidental vehicle impact.

The structure is currently in a critical condition with a three-meter cordon in place and has been removed from all operation use.



Lessons Learnt

Recommendations in response to the identified critical structural defects for LVL supported buildings currently in use within the National Highways depot estate:

Annual Inspection Regime for all LVL (Laminated Veneer Lumber) supported buildings with prioritisation of Salt barns and salt storage buildings.

Cleaning and maintenance schedule for gutter clearing and maintenance to be increased for LVL supported buildings.

Note: Visual inspections are not adequate in identifying Wet rot with LVL (Laminated Veneer Lumber)

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If you have any queries about this safety alert information announcement or any other safety announcement then please contact Jon.dickson@nationalhighways.co.uk