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Health and Safety Executive		Sector Information Minute	
Manufacturing		SIM 03/2004/61 (formerly 04/2004/14)	
Cancellation Date	01/06/2008	Open Government Status	Fully Open
Version No & Date	1: 01/06/2004	Author Unit/Section	Manufacturing Sector, Birmingham

Target Audience
 All FOD Inspectors
 Workplace Contact Officers
 Safety Unit


ROADSIDE RECOVERY AND REPAIR (RRR)

This SIM contains guidance on the standards expected of duty holders engaged in the recovery and/or repair of motor vehicles at the roadside. It extends the advice in OM 2003/103 *Work-related road traffic incidents: An explanation of circumstances where HSE may have a role to play* on HSE's role in relation to work-related road traffic risks and incidents.

INTRODUCTION

1 This SIM contains guidance on the standards expected of duty holders engaged in the recovery and/or repair of motor vehicles at the roadside. It extends the advice in OM 2003/103 Appendix, para 35 *Work-related road traffic incidents: An explanation of circumstances where HSE may have a role to play* on HSE's role in relation to work-related road traffic risks and incidents during Roadside Recovery and Repair (RRR).

2 It includes examples of both transport and non-transport related risks. However, the following are not covered –

- risks while driving to and from the recovery/repair site - see INDG382 [Driving at work: Managing work-related road safety](#) 
- risks to those who drive as part of their work and may have to carry out 'runners' repairs eg changing a flat tyre
- risks associated with any hazardous cargo being transported by the casualty vehicle.

3 The information applies to all businesses that operate recovery/repair vehicles or otherwise offer roadside assistance, including tyre and windscreen repair/replacement, and motoring clubs such as the AA and RAC, etc.

BACKGROUND

4 There is a very high risk of serious injury to people at work providing roadside assistance from other road users. For example, three out of every five serious motorway accidents involve a broken down vehicle on the hard shoulder, and in 1996, 13 of the 165 motorway fatalities happened on the hard shoulder. One of the trade associations estimates that there are approx. 6-8 fatalities every year amongst the 5000 or so RRR technicians. However, as many of these Road Traffic Incidents (RTIs) are not reportable under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR), the exact numbers of workers killed or injured is not known.

5 The protection of workers and members of the public from traffic risks on public roads is mostly a matter for road traffic law enforced by the police and other Highways Agency, Traffic Commissioners. Issues such as danger to other road users caused by the positioning of RRR vehicles, for example, will be a matter for the police.

6 However, the general duties under occupational health and safety law to protect people at work and others from risks arising out of work activities are very broad. They overlap with other legislation and are capable of application to the roadside recovery/repair of motor vehicles. Where safety cannot be adequately regulated by the enforcement of specific legislation, such as the Road Traffic Acts and Road Vehicles (Construction and Use) Regulations, health and safety at work legislation may be applicable (see OM 2003/103). In such cases, safe systems of work should be devised by the employer to ensure the safety of workers and public.

7 All on-the-road work activities involving RRR companies will potentially fall to HSE for enforcement, as Local authorities (LA) have no health and safety enforcement responsibilities in relation to the public highway, even for employers with their HQs in LA enforced premises.

PRECAUTIONS

8 Duty holders should ensure that there are sensible precautions in place to protect those involved in roadside assistance from other road users. For example, they should ensure that—

- safe working procedures are used
- vehicles and equipment of an appropriate standard are provided and maintained
- where necessary, appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) is provided and used
- all persons have been adequately trained by a competent person on how to work safely at the roadside and the precautions they should be recommending to the occupants of casualty vehicles.

Safe systems of work

9 Advice on safe systems of work for ensuring the health and safety of both roadside

technicians and members of the public who may be affected by their activities, has been published in:

- British Standard Code of Practice, BS 7121-12:1999 *Safe use of cranes – Part 12: Recovery vehicles and equipment – Code of Practice*, and
- British Standards Institute (BSI) publication PAS43 *Safe working of vehicle breakdown and recovery operators: Management system specification* (see [para 28](#)). This guidance on the safe management of vehicle breakdown and recovery operations was produced by SURVIVE.

SURVIVE is a partnership between the Government, police, motoring industry and service organizations. Its aim is to improve the safety of RRR operators and customers and is currently consulting with interested bodies on procedures for 'breakdowns in coned-off areas'.

10 For the future, as part of a new government initiative to improve the way in which the strategic road network is managed, the Highways Agency is discussing Vehicle Recovery activities with representatives from the industry.

11 Essential features of a safe system of work should include –

- breakdown details of casualty vehicle: Obtain sufficient information so that an initial assessment of the job can be carried out prior to arrival eg its exact location; the road classification (motorway, dual/single carriageway); the nature of the problem eg flat tyre, broken windscreen, engine failure, crash damage etc; presence of the police or other agency; weather conditions;
- working at the roadside: Procedures for parking/manoeuvring of recovery/repair vehicle; use of visual warning devices eg hazard warning lights, cones, direction arrows; safe places for working and for waiting; personal protective equipment;
- non-transport risks eg awareness of overhead power lines; falls from height; access under vehicles; repair of motor vehicles at the roadside (see [paras 20 & 21](#)).

Vehicles and equipment

12 British Standard BS 7901 *Specification for recovery vehicles and vehicle recovery equipment* specifies performance requirements for equipment to be used for vehicle recovery activities.

13 All machinery, plant, equipment and tools used at work are subject to the requirements of the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations (PUWER). 'Work equipment' includes commercial motor vehicles such as recovery vehicles, vans and lorries, and privately owned vehicles used for work purposes. In practice, more specific road traffic legislation eg MOT, takes precedence and the employer should ensure that any vehicle that goes onto public roads is roadworthy and insured, and the driver has a valid driving licence. PUWER will apply to those parts of a vehicle that do not affect its roadworthiness.

14 Other 'work equipment' not owned by the recovery/repair business eg tool or bottle

jack borrowed from the customer, is subject to health and safety legislation and the user has a responsibility to ensure that it meets all legal requirements.

15 'Lifting equipment' used during RRR activities will have to comply with the requirements of the Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations (LOLER). Some lifting equipment associated with recovery vehicles is very obviously subject to LOLER. However, LOLER will not normally apply to –

- moveable beds and ramps;
- winches whose main purpose is dragging the casualty vehicle along the ground;
- towing dollies where the weight is supported on a small pair of wheels.

Spectacle frames used for lifting vehicles and supporting them whilst towing, are considered to be subject to LOLER ([OC 803/69](#)).

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

16 Agreed working practices with the police and other agencies may specify the use of safety or protective equipment and the standards to which they should conform eg high visibility garments and accessories for use on the highway conforming to BS EN 471. The risk assessment carried out by duty holders should identify other PPE eg weatherproof clothing, footwear, head/eye/hearing protection, gloves that should be available and used.

Training

17 Roadside technicians should be adequately trained by a competent person on the -

- risks of working at the roadside
- safe operating procedures and assessment of risks relevant to all aspects of vehicle recovery/repair
- use of recovery vehicles and its equipment
- correct use of safety and personal protective equipment
- precautions to be taken by the occupants of the casualty vehicle

18 There are a number of trade associations within the breakdown/recovery industry that may be able to advise on the availability of suitable training courses eg to PAS43 standard (see [para 9](#)), including –

- [Association of Vehicle Recovery Operators](#) (AVRO)
- [Road Rescue Recovery Association](#) (RRRA)
- [Institute of Vehicle Recovery](#) (IVR)

Both the IVR and AVRO are represented on the HSE MVR Health and Safety Forum (see [HSE MVR website](#)).

The IVR has published a series of videos to help train roadside technicians including:

- Life on the Edge 6 *Roadside Technicians: It's your call*. The video covers the

assessment of risks by people involved in roadside recovery operations (copies available from IVR at Tel: 01895 436426 or E:mail: mail@theIVR.com) - see [para 28](#).


19 [Automotive Skills Ltd](#), the National Training Organisation (NTO) for the automotive industry, has developed a training course for people involved in roadside assistance. It is currently discussing with relevant organisations how best the training can be delivered.

NON-TRANSPORT RISKS

20 The repair of vehicles at the roadside should take into account the limited access to plant and equipment normally available in repair garages. Specific guidance for dealing with casualty vehicles fitted with an air-conditioning system and/or fuelled by liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) can be found in –

[INDG349 Safe working with vehicle air-conditioning systems](#) 

[INDG387 Safe working with LPG-fuelled vehicles](#)  and [poster](#) 

In addition, as many calls for roadside assistance are as a result of misfuelling ie incorrect filling of diesel vehicles with petrol and vice versa, companies should be aware of the advice in [INDG 331 Safe use of Petrol in garages](#) , particularly on the use of fuel retrievers.

21 There have been many serious, sometimes fatal, injuries arising from other non-transport risks including contact with overhead power lines, falls from vehicles, particularly HGVs, and when working underneath vehicles. Roadside technicians should be adequately trained to assess all risks to their health and safety and provided with all appropriate equipment.

ACTION BY INSPECTORS

22 When visiting garages and other premises that offer roadside assistance particularly RRR, inspectors should ensure that -

- all risks to employees and others have been properly assessed;
- work equipment provided is being inspected/maintained and, where appropriate, examined; and
- technicians have been adequately trained for recovering and/or repairing vehicles at the roadside.

23 HSE as the enforcing authority for on-the-road work activities could be responsible for dealing with RTI notifications and complaints, even at LA enforced premises. Where applicable, inspectors will need to liaise closely with the appropriate LA and they should remember that they do not have thevires to enquire or enforce over any on-site activities at such premises.

24 Notifications of both reportable and non-reportable RTIs will be received by the HSE

from the police, employers, members of the public, LAs, and others, though the exemption from the reporting requirements under RIDDOR for most types of these accidents should limit the numbers. When deciding if HSE has a role in relation to particular incidents, including those that are non-reportable, inspectors should consider the principles and practices set out in OM 2003/103.

25 The police will normally take the lead in the investigation of RTIs. Inspectors should agree to assist only where the police can demonstrate with evidence that serious safety management failures have been a significant contributory factor in the incident. Other than in exceptional cases, eg those involving the carriage of dangerous goods or construction activities, HSE inspectors should **not** take part in the initial investigation so that there should be no need for an on-the-road presence.

26 All roads are dangerous places to work. In the exceptional circumstances where an on-the-road presence at an RTI is considered necessary, inspectors should try to arrange to be transported to site in a police car from either a police station or HSE office. Appropriate PPE eg high visibility clothing etc should be agreed with the police and worn at all times. Where possible, the scene should be observed from a position of safety, such as a bridge or adjoining footpath or lower speed road.

27 The police will be able to advise inspectors on any interest of other agencies eg Highways Agency; Traffic Commissioners; Vehicle and Operator Services Agency (VOSA) in the investigation of a particular RTI. HSE inspectors must ensure that they communicate clearly to all concerned the action they intend to take (or not take). Guidance on enforcement action can be found in OM 2003/103.

FURTHER INFORMATION

28 Inspectors wanting to borrow copies of the following should contact the Manufacturing Sector in the Leeds Office:

- British Standards Institute (BSI) publication PAS43 *Safe working of vehicle breakdown and recovery operators: Management system specification* (para 9), and
- IVR video: *Life on the Edge 6 Roadside Technicians: It's your call* ([para 18](#))

29 Further information can be obtained from the Manufacturing/Engineering Sector, HSE Birmingham.

Date first issued: 01 June 2004