

Serious road accident on M5

Issued to: All Network Rail line managers, safety professionals and Principal Contractors

Ref: NRL 17/01

Date of issue: 04/01/2017

Location: M5, Clevedon

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Overview

At 04:47 on 29 July 2016 a Ford 9-seater minibus left the north bound carriageway of the M5 between Junctions 20 and 19 near Bristol and came to rest on the motorway verge.

The vehicle was being driven by a sub-contractor working for Network Rail and had three occupants; all were labour-only sub-contract operatives.

All three operatives were taken to hospital. Fortunately, there was no serious injury to any of them and they were all released from hospital later that day.

The team were working for Plymouth Delivery Unit (Works Delivery) and were travelling back to South Wales after a shift near Liskeard, Cornwall. The vehicle belonged to the contractor.

An investigation has concluded that the immediate cause of the accident was that the driver fell asleep while driving.

Underlying causes

The driver was fatigued from travelling between the work site and the team's home area near Cardiff, leading to him falling asleep whilst driving.

The Contractor had failed to confirm accommodation so the team had nowhere to sleep after their booked shift, (on 28 July) driving back to Cardiff and arriving at approximately 10:00.

The driver and his two colleagues had insufficient rest time (less than 12 hours) prior to starting the return journey to Cornwall for the following shift later on the same day (at 20:15).

The Contractor failed to correctly assess the travelling time between Cardiff and the work site. The journey took approximately 3 hours 30 minutes, but the Contractor had not allowed for a suitable rest break during the journey.

Only one of the group was able to drive the vehicle, so the driving task could not be shared.

Key message

- All staff should have a minimum of 12 hours rest between shifts. Travelling to work sites counts as work time.
- Travelling time from base to worksite must be considered before allocating work. What can be done to ensure staff have sufficient rest between shifts?
- Door to door time must not be planned to exceed 14 hours. This needs to include picking up and dropping off team members.
- Planning must take account of fatigue management policies for every shift.
- Planning should identify and confirm designated driver(s) and, where necessary, hotel accommodation.
- Route and contractor assurance should test compliance with fatigue management policies and the Code of Conduct.

Copies of Shared Learning documents are available on [Safety Central](#)