

Highways Safety Hub Team Newsletter

November 2023

End of an Era

After 42 years and 84 days of continuous service with Morgan Sindall, Robert John Tootell, Bob to his friends, said cheery-bye to the industry on October 11th 2023.....for now.

Rumours Bob has retired are greatly exaggerated. He is taking a well-earned break until the new year, then he will decide what to do next.

Bob said in his parting message, "I would like to thank everyone for their time and energy in the promotion of good health and safety, and I wish each of you continued success in thinking safe and delivery of same, wherever you are, whatever you are doing, and whoever you are doing it with."

Bob has been a regular in the hub since the very early days and an active contributor to many of its initiatives and this newsletter. Most notably Bob was the creator and maintainer of the all alert database, an invaluable tool to maintaining our sector corporate memory. We are currently seeking another equally fastidious individual to take over this initiative to keep this going. Anyone willing to take this on please contact :

highwayssafetyhub@gmail.com.

From all of us at Highways Safety Hub we would like to thank Bob for all his hard work over the past 10 years or so and wish him all the best in whatever he ends up doing (including Golfing)



Skanska – Zero Accident Forum 83 – Focus on Significant Risks

A risk profiling exercise undertaken on Skanska Infrastructure's potential fatality near misses over the last 12 months identified four key areas – working at height, lifting operations, electrical safety and people plant interface. These formed the topics for Skanska's 83rd Zero Accident Forum (ZAF) on November 2nd at Milton Keynes Stadium.

The meeting provided the opportunity for colleagues, customers, supply chain and joint-venture partners to share experiences, learning and knowledge to improve health, safety and wellbeing across the sector. Over 100 delegates attended the meeting to discuss significant risks and how to eliminate them where possible, and to apply above the line engineering controls where residual risk remains.

Infrastructure Managing Director, Simon Clitheroe and Head of Health, Safety and Wellbeing, Lee McBride introduced the main event and welcomed Jason Anker MBE as the keynote speaker.

Jason had a fall from height on a construction site at the age of 24 years old. During the forum Jason shared his journey following the fall with the audience and how 'the ripple effect' created by his accident impacted others and how his accident has informed his approach to wellbeing and mental health.

Rupert Lown, Network Rail Chief Health and Safety Officer, shared Network Rail's approach to track worker safety and what they have been doing to eliminate risk by bringing in new technology and ensuring the basics, like safe access points with proper paths and steps, were in place to allow workers to safely access the railway lines, reflecting their 'everyone home safe every day' commitment.

Dylan Roberts, Skanska's Director of Health, Safety, Wellbeing & Quality, went on to provide a Skanska perspective on the importance of health and safety including safety performance and our 2024+ focus areas.

The afternoon session was split into workshops covering a range of different risks, and were delivered in conjunction with supply chain partners including Lynch Plant Hire, Flannery's and Nationwide.

During the event suppliers were invited to showcase some of the latest industry innovations for safety, including human form recognition cameras, VR headsets for red zone training and geo-fencing solutions.



Commenting on the event, Lee McBride said:

“I had a great day hosting the ZAF forum and meeting great people from across the rail, highways and water sectors. Thanks to Jason Anker MBE for sharing his inspirational journey. I know everyone in the audience will take away their own piece of learning and apply it in their own lives. I certainly will.

“I’m also very grateful to Rupert Lown for sharing Network Rail’s approach to track worker safety. It was clear to see the monumental effort that has gone into eliminating this risk. Thanks to all our speakers, demonstrators and delegates for contributing to an important part of our journey, so we can work towards a safer construction environment.”

Disposing of Vapes Safely

Disposable vapes are powered by batteries which are made from lithium. Over 10 tonnes of lithium were thrown out with disposable vapes in the UK last year (Greenpeace), enough to power 1200 electric car batteries.



There has been an increase in disposable vapes being discarded across the infrastructure which presents the following hazards:

- Fire hazard – lithium batteries are highly flammable and can cause dangerous fires.
- Environmental hazard – there is a risk of harmful chemicals, like battery acid, lithium and nicotine being released into water, air, or soil, causing damage to the environment. If chewed or digested they could harm wild animals or pets.
- Vapes also contain several other components such as plastic, copper, rubber and even glass, all of which do not decompose easily when incorrectly discarded.
- Vapes are classified as electrical waste and electronic equipment and should not be put into the general waste or recycling bins.
- Businesses must arrange commercial waste collection of any old vapes they produce. This could be through staff getting rid of old vapes, litter picking on maintenance contracts or any other means. Removal by licensed waste carriers and recycling is vital and a legal requirement. The easiest way to do this is with WEEE bins and collections.

Signs of Changing Lives

Over 100 veterans and people with disabilities are making 1,000 road signs each week for use on England's motorways and major A-roads.

The Royal British Legion Industries (RBLI) is leading this through its social enterprise, Britain's Bravest Manufacturing Company (BBMC). It employs more than 100 people – 70% of whom are veterans and people with disabilities – and reinvests 100% of its surplus to provide greater employment opportunities to its beneficiaries.

Jeff Blizard (pictured), a former soldier in the Queen's Regiment, was diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and was out of work for 10 years. BBMC has supported Jeff on his journey back to full time employment making road signs in the factory. Thanks to the support from National Highways and some key suppliers, who committed to spending £800,000 with BBMC in 2022-23 and £1 million in 2023-24, the factory has significantly expanded its operations and improved the lives of the people it supports. This support has enabled them to invest in state-of-the-art machinery which is faster and more energy efficient. They have also committed to become a Real Living Wage Employer which will have a lasting impact on people across RBLI



Working on Hard Shoulders & Roadside Verges

As a result of several serious incidents involving members of the public and roadworkers killed and seriously injured on hard shoulders and roadside verges a new Raising the Bar guidance document has been developed. This guidance must be read in conjunction with the existing requirements detailed in the National Highways document GG115 Requirements for works on the hard shoulder and roadside verges on high-speed dual carriageways which can be found here:



[f6a79f63-f077-4b67-ae0b-390ad229a9e7 \(standardsforhighways.co.uk\)](https://standardsforhighways.co.uk/f6a79f63-f077-4b67-ae0b-390ad229a9e7)

The objective of the supplementary guidance in the new Raising the Bar is to reduce the overall risk exposure on hard shoulders and verges to all parties and to provide additional guidance on the selection of suitable controls including traffic management. The aim and outcome is to increase awareness of the dangers working on the hard shoulder and on verges present both to workers and to the travelling public with a view to developing standardised approaches to control measures.

The new document can be viewed here on the Safety Hub website:

[Microsoft Word - xRtB 42 - Working on Hardshoulders and Roadside Verges October 2023 v1 With Info Sheets.docx \(highwaysafetyhub.com\)](https://highwaysafetyhub.com/Microsoft%20Word%20-%20xRtB%2042%20-%20Working%20on%20Hardshoulders%20and%20Roadside%20Verges%20October%202023%20v1%20With%20Info%20Sheets.docx)

Raising the Bar

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.

[Home \(highwaysafetyhub.com\)](https://highwaysafetyhub.com)



November – Lung Cancer Awareness Month

November is lung cancer chronic obstructive pulmonary disease awareness month. Through their Dust Kills campaign, HSE is highlighting the risks of developing lung cancer and COPD through exposure to respirable crystalline silica (RCS) at work and how to control the risks in your workplace.

COPD describes a number of breathing problems where there is damage to the breathing tubes and air sacs within the lung. Breathing in dusts, fumes, chemicals or gases in the workplace may cause serious long term lung damage. This includes exposure to respirable crystalline silica (RCS) released into the air when handling sand and cutting stone, brick or tiles.

If you, or someone you know, work in a trade or industry where the health of your lungs may be affected by breathing in hazardous substances at work, share this information to help spread the word that occupational lung disease is preventable, and we have free advice and downloads to help protect workers' health.

These deaths are preventable if exposure to the risks is effectively controlled. To help control exposure to risks, view the guidance on preventing work-related lung disease.

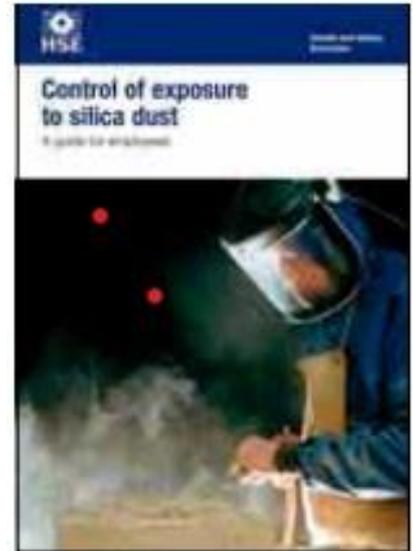
Workers need to be aware of the health risks associated with the materials they are working with. Certain work activities, such as brick and tile manufacture and cutting, stone working, and foundry work can all release silica particles in the airborne dust which are too small to be seen. Exposure to silica dust can cause lung cancer and other serious respiratory diseases that may lead to early death.

The links below are to HSE Guidance documents:

- [silica dust guide for workers \(.pdf\)](#)
- [health surveillance advice \(.pdf\)](#) G404 for those exposed to respirable Crystalline silica (RCS)

Link to early findings to the 2023 HSE Dust Campaign:

[Respiratory risks in construction: early findings from HSE's latest Dust Kills health campaign | HSE Media Centre](#)



First Gritting of the Season as Temperatures Drop

Gritters went out over the weekend for the first significant operation of this autumn and winter season on motorways and major A-roads as temperatures dipped across the country.

Leading-edge technology, in-depth forecasting, and work with partners such as the Met Office and MetDesk means National Highways knows precisely where and when to treat roads with salt.



National Highways, which operates England's 4,500-mile strategic road network, is urging drivers to take care during the poor weather while also giving gritting teams space to operate.

Darren Clark, Severe Weather Resilience Manager at National Highways, said:

"We manage a huge roads network nationwide – with over 4,500 miles of motorways and A-roads.

"Not all roads will need treating on any given day. Gritters may need to go out in some regions if road temperatures fall below +1 degrees C, and if there is a risk of ice forming, but not in other areas if conditions are not as cold.

"National Highways is committed to treating every road which needs to be treated – whenever it is needed. We are armed with the latest technology, forecasting intelligence and years of experience to help us make informed decisions about where and when we need to spread salt to help keep road users safe in even the most adverse weather conditions."

The government-owned company switched over to autumn and winter operations on 1 October, readying teams at 128 depots across the country to keep the country's busiest roads open amid deteriorating weather.

This includes monitoring Met Office weather forecasts along with regular road assessments from meteorological experts MetDesk. The roads need gritting when road surface temperatures drop below +1 degrees C. Motorists are also reminded to keep TRIP in mind this autumn and winter season – Top-up oil, water and screenwash; Rest every two hours; Inspect tyres; and prepare for weather conditions.

Essential advice for motorists this winter season

- Stick to the main roads where you can and only travel if necessary.
- Slow down – it can take 10 times longer to stop in icy conditions.
- Use a high gear – this will help avoid wheel spin.

- Accelerate gently, using low revs. You may need to take off in second gear to avoid skidding.
- You may need up to 10 times the normal gap between your car and the car in front.
- Try not to brake suddenly – it may lock up your wheels and you could skid further.
- Be extra cautious at road junctions where road markings may not be visible.
- Look out for gritters spreading salt or using snow ploughs, and only overtake if it's safe to do so.

National Highways last year completed the assembly of its new £44m two-year investment in a fleet of 252 Romaquip-Volvo gritter vehicles, some of which carried out winter operations last year, and all of which will be involved in salt spreading this season. The investment now means the organisation has around 530 gritter vehicles available this winter. Vehicles in our winter gritting fleet can carry up to around 12,000 kg of salt, or 8,400 kg of salt and 3,600 litres of brine at any one time. The Romaquip-Volvo gritting vehicles can spread up to 50mph, encouraging traffic to keep moving more effectively on the roads even when they are being treated. When not treating they can travel up to 56mph. However, National Highways is keen for motorists to continue to give gritter vehicles the time and space they need to do their jobs – to keep us all safe when we are travelling on its motorways and A-roads.

Darren added: “As our gritting teams go out more and more to spread salt on the roads this coming autumn and winter season, our message is simple to all road users: ‘Please be patient and give us the time and space to do what we need to do to keep you safe.’”

Ready for autumn and winter seasons

Autumn and winter can bring more adverse and severe weather conditions which can affect motorists and these include fog, heavy rain, high winds and gales and ice and snow.

Along with more than 250 weather stations, National Highways works with independent meteorological experts Metdesk which run from October 1 to April 30 and complement the national Met Office weather forecast, providing a level of granularity and precision about changing road surface temperatures across our road network. This gives us the detailed knowledge determine where and when to salt roads so they remain open and safe for people to use.

All of the information we gather helps us to inform road users about current road conditions whatever the weather. We also share information through channels including our website, third party travel providers including sat nav companies and local radio stations.