



Safety Alert

Finger injury – 3 Day Lost Time Accident

29 March 2021

The following pages of this safety alert were issued by Highways England's supply chain partner:

Balfour Beatty

Safety Alert

Finger injury – 3 Day Lost Time Accident

On Monday 1st February 2021 an operative sustained a significant finger injury whilst unhitching a trailer from a Ford transit van.

A Ganger and Operative had experienced issues inserting the towing pin when hitching the trailer. The holes on the towing hitch and mount were slightly misaligned, so a claw hammer had been used to tap the pin into place.

The force used to insert the pin meant that it couldn't be removed by hand, so the claw hammer was again used when unhitching the trailer. The operative used the hammer in an upwards motion driving a 150mm bolt through the bottom hitch hole to push the pin out, after a few strikes the pin started to move slowly upwards. As the pin released the operative felt a sudden pain in his left index finger (the hand holding the bolt).



When the operative removed his glove he realized that the flesh had been stripped from the tip of his index finger exposing the bone (distal phalanx). His finger had either been struck by the claw hammer directly or crushed between the bolt head and towing hitch (the Injured party was unable to determine exact cause of the injury)

Findings:

- The misalignment was not considered by the team to be significant so a claw hammer and bolt were used to insert/ remove the towing pin (the pin should not have needed additional force to be applied)
- The misalignment (possibly caused by the hitch being previously knocked) should have been logged and the vehicle quarantined from towing activities.

Applying Golden Rule number 4 'Stop if anything changes' would have prevented this injury. The ganger and injured party should have stopped and re-assessed the operation when they identified that the pin didn't fit correctly.

Also remember that correctly inspecting vehicles (including its accessories), reporting defects immediately and restricting vehicle use are all fundamental controls essential in preventing towing related incidents.

For further information please contact the A63 safety team.