

Safety alert



Operative broke his ankle while getting out of his Ford Transit pickup.

Incident Details

One of our colleagues has broken his ankle recently while getting out of his Ford Transit pickup.

The incident occurred when he parked his works vehicle off the highway in a roadside layby. It was a gravelled area which had some depressions in it. As he slid down from the vehicle his foot slipped sideways on the loose/uneven surface and his ankle buckled under him.

An x-ray at the local hospital showed that he had fractured (broken) a bone in his ankle. This meant that it was reportable to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). He is expected to be off work for at least 6 weeks

What can you do to prevent a similar incident?

- Maintain your “situational awareness”. Look for things in your immediate surroundings which can become a threat to your safety and take precautions to avoid them hurting you or others.
- This is important on tasks you do every day but have subtle difference that we do not always see as a threat (Uneven and loose surface in this case)
- Think about the potential risks involved and try to plan your approach to reduce those risks.
- When parking vehicles and plant, check that all points into and out of or off the vehicle are level and free from loose material, depressions, vertical edges etc.
- Regularly inspect access steps and keep them clean and free of debris, bitumen, oils etc.
- Ensure your boots have good grip and are properly laced up so that they provide your ankle with support.
- Always take your time when getting into or out of vehicles and plant.
- When exiting or entering cabs with step access always face the vehicle or plant and maintain 3 points of contact. On lower level cabs (Transit style vehicles etc.) use the hand holds on doors or door frame to support your weight until firm ground has been established.
- Never jump or allow your unsupported body weight to drop down from a vehicle or plant - always use all the steps and handholds provided.
- Always check the ground conditions and use gradual weight transfer before putting your full weight down.
- Avoid getting out onto or walking on verges especially if they are wet or muddy.
- Visually check areas where you intend to walk for hidden dips, holes, trip hazards and general stability.
- If necessary, clear the area of debris or slip/trip hazards before starting work and keep it clear during work activities.
- Report all slips, trips and fall hazards and discuss with managers how these risks could be minimised.
- When loading vehicles, try to position equipment in such a way that you eliminate the need to climb on the back of the vehicle
- If you do have to get on to the rear of the vehicle then be aware of your footing and watch out for tools, equipment and materials that could cause a slip, trip, or fall. Make sure your edge fall protection is working properly

We cannot always control where we must work but we can reduce the risk of injury due to slips, trips and falls by taking simple precautions.

Think about your situational awareness and what could harm you or others.

This safety alert has been prepared by the RSTA.

For further information regarding this safety alert please email: rory@rsta-uk.org

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