

SAFETY ALERT



Towed Equipment Safety Alert

Document No: **IW-HSQE-SA-57**

Revision:1.00

Approved By: Finbarr Gubbins

1. What Happened?

There have been several incidents involving towed equipment failures in Irish Water Operations and Asset Delivery over the past few years, most recently in 2021 when two High Potential (HiPo) Incidents resulted from the towing of trailers.

Of eleven incidents in total, five resulted in total detachments from the towing vehicle due to the following failures:

- Weld failure of hitch plate.
- Bolt failure of hitch plate.
- Ball hitch inappropriate for the towing duty.
- Safety chain was not properly installed.
- Finally, a trailer detached whilst stopped at lights and was prevented from detaching fully by the safety chain.

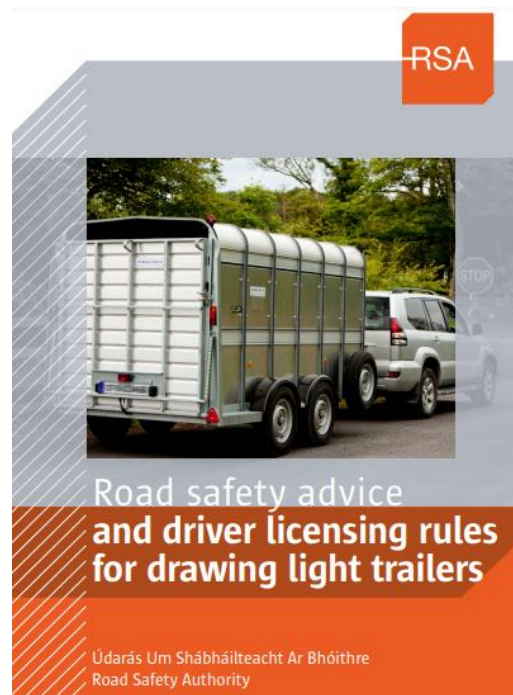
Three incidents resulted from towed trailers striking other vehicles or objects during reversing manoeuvres. One incident resulted from a trailer wheel detaching when in motion and a further incident occurred where a mini-excavator overturned whilst being loaded onto a trailer.

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2. Immediate Actions

- Ensure that the content of this safety alert is communicated to all relevant personnel operating within your organisation.
- Visual inspections should be carried out on all towed equipment to check for obvious defects or damage prior to use.

3. Further Actions

Driver licencing, training and competence

- Only personnel deemed competent (with required driver licence category, experienced and adequately trained) should be permitted to tow a trailer or other form of mobile equipment.
- Additional training should be undertaken depending on risk assessment and types of equipment being towed (taking towing vehicle into account also).
- Spotters should be utilised when reversing towed plant into position to

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help guide the driver and to ensure that no other personnel are within the vicinity of the vehicle and towed equipment.

- Drivers to adhere to appropriate speed when traversing speed ramps whilst towing, otherwise there is a risk that the tow bar will strike the speed ramp, thereby resulting in damage to same.

Maintenance

- All vehicles and towed plant should be inspected as per daily driver defect checks and maintained as per manufacturer's recommendations.
- The drawing/towing vehicle must hold a certificate of roadworthiness (NCT/ CVRT).
- All towbars should be designed & suitable for the intended purpose, meet all applicable Type Approval Regulations and be regularly inspected (prior to using a tow bar, drivers should check that all tow bar retaining bolts are in place, secure and showing no signs of corrosion. Also, the safety chain/breakaway cable and trailer handbrake should be checked prior to use).
- When hiring towed plant or equipment, records of inspection and/or maintenance should be sought from the supplier.
- Safety chain/cables should be inspected, in good overall condition and correctly rated for the trailer type and load.
- Ensure that the mirrors on the vehicle are in good condition, clean, clear of condensation and correctly adjusted"

Loading and load security

- Loads should be properly secured & restrained, along with training and instruction provided for load securing.
- Those involved in loading trailers should be aware of the correct distribution and load placement based on the trailer design.

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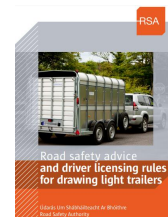
- Capacities of the towing vehicle and trailer should not be exceeded.
- Regular checks should be conducted on all load security systems (ratchet straps, chains, etc.).

Throughout the journey ensure to continually inspect the contents of the trailer for load security, trailer lights, tyres and any other relevant safety checks.

4. Further Information:

- RSA - Additional information on towing trailer can be obtained from the RSA portal - <https://www.rsa.ie/road-safety>;
- The RSA have also developed a free booklet to “Road safety advice and driver licensing rules for drawing light trailers (under 3,500kg);

https://www.rsa.ie/docs/default-source/road-safety/r3-education/road-safety-advice-for-drawing-light-trailers.pdf?sfvrsn=10e95c38_3



- Additional information on driver licencing can be obtained from the NDLS website <https://www.ndls.ie/>;
- For information regarding Fleet Driver Training, please contact the IW fleet department via email fleet@water.ie.

For further information on this safety alert please contact hsqe@water.ie.

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