

Safety Alert

Event Number: 45456

Maximo Number: 130303

Event Date: 4/03/2021

Classification: Public Safety Near Miss

Utility Vehicle Brake Failure

Description of Event:

An Electrix work crew were travelling to site towing a trailer and ATV. As they were passing a school, they approached a pedestrian crossing. A child riding a bicycle crossed at the pedestrian crossing without looking. This forced the driver of the vehicle to suddenly brake hard. The brakes failed and the driver reacted by using the handbrake to bring the vehicle to a complete stop, narrowly missing the child on the bicycle.

Immediate Actions:

The work crew pulled over to the side of the road and arranged for the vehicle and trailer to be returned to the yard. The vehicle was sent for a mechanical inspection to establish why the brakes failed. The event was discussed with the school Principal to communicate to staff and students and remind them of road safety around pedestrian crossings

Findings:

- The mechanical inspection found that wear and tear on the brakes had been accelerated by the harsh environment the vehicle operates in. This means that abrasive materials such as pumice, sand, silt, and clay from the soil can build up around brake pads and increase the wear and tear on the brakes.
- The vehicle was 60 kg over its Gross Vehicle Mass (GVM)*. This includes the weight of the vehicle, fuel, accessories, occupants, tools, equipment, etc. of the vehicle. The vehicle being overweight was not considered to be the root cause of the incident.
- Mechanical inspections on all vehicles exposed to similar harsh environments, revealed no signs of brake problems.

Actions to Prevent Reoccurrence:

- Ensure that the undercarriage of the vehicle is thoroughly washed and cleaned regularly to avoid contamination and degradation of the brakes.
- Check that your vehicle's GVM is not exceeded and that weight is distributed evenly for safe and efficient operation. Refer to the vehicle manufacturer's handbook.
- Be alert when driving past parked vehicles or roadside stalls as pedestrians may walk out without warning.

*GVM is the maximum all-up weight specified by the vehicle's manufacturer.

For further information please contact Damian Walker, Senior HSE Advisor – 021 928 197

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