

Mr. Nigel Parsley, Senior Coroner for Suffolk  
The Suffolk Coroner's Service  
Head Office and Court  
Beacon House  
White House Road  
Ipswich  
IP1 5PB

25 May 2022

Dear Mr. Parsley,

**REGULATION 28 REPORT TO PREVENT FUTURE DEATHS – INQUEST INTO THE DEATH OF CORRIE McKEAGUE**

We write in response to your Report dated 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022.

This letter sets out our response to each of the matters of concern you identify in your Report and adopts the same order and numbering (identified in bold below).

As a member of the Environmental Services Association, Biffa has, for many years, been part of the Waste Industry Safety and Health forum (WISH), which involves all major waste companies in conjunction with the Health and Safety Executive and manufacturers. Biffa is currently chairing the latest review of industry guidance on best practice for dealing with the risk of people in and around bins.

Since your Report was issued, we have engaged with some of the other recipients of the Report to discuss bin design and locking, bin lifting and weighing systems. These discussions are ongoing.

**1. Ineffective bin locks**

We believe that the existing locking mechanisms are effective when used and fulfil their purpose of securing waste inside the bin and preventing unauthorised access. However, we have engaged with bin manufacturers on the locking options available and our understanding is that they are considering alternative design options available to secure containers. Whilst there are snap lock options available (being locks that 'lock' on closure of the bin lid and then require unlocking), as you heard during the Inquest, these do present an entombing risk for any person entering the bin. Options to overcome this risk are being explored by the manufacturers.

The effective use of any locking mechanism is reliant upon customers using the locks and not overfilling the bin so that the bin lid can be closed and the locks used effectively. We will be reminding our customers of the importance of bins being secured and, where feasible, being stored in a secure location.

## **2. Ineffective search of the bin**

The existing bin weighing systems fitted to our vehicles record the weight of the bin after the emptying cycle has been completed. This involves the equipment recording the weight of the bin before and after it is emptied to calculate the net weight of its contents. We have engaged with the designer of our bin weighing systems to establish the feasibility of using historical bin weight data to recognize if a bin about to be emptied is outside the usual range of historical weights recorded. They have confirmed that the existing weighing system does not have this capability. Any technology solution to achieve this will require a significant redesign of the weighing system and Biffa's systems that hold the historical weighing data. Whilst changing these systems is not feasible in the near term we are keen to explore how improvements to this and other technology in use or in development could help to reduce the risk and will continue to work with equipment designers and suppliers.

## **3. Any driver not having the means to search the bin thoroughly or safely**

In our experience it is not always possible for our operatives to search the entire contents of a bin safely. The search of bins is typically limited to the top layer of the materials within a bin and this search may include the use of a push stick. As part of our commitment to continuous improvement, we regularly review our toolbox talks and any other training on the requirements for checking bins (which may include the use of a push stick where this is appropriate to the size of bin to be checked). Any updates and changes to these would typically be communicated by internal awareness campaigns for our operatives on the risks to people in and around bins and our safety procedures for checking bins to prevent injury.

## **4. Poor visibility through the Perspex viewing window on the lorry.**

We have verified that the vehicle involved in this case, complies with the requirements of the European Safety standard BS EN 1501 (Refuse Collection Vehicles – General Requirements and Safety Requirements). This standard does not currently contain a requirement for side windows to be fitted.

On the vehicle involved, the side windows fitted are to allow operator vision of the discharge of the container contents relative to the compaction mechanism i.e. the point at which container/mechanism physically approach one another. The window has therefore been positioned to facilitate viewing of this operation, i.e. at eye line and/or above, rather than to check the contents of the vehicle hopper. We note the comments in your report, and we are reviewing our operating instructions to ensure there is clarity on how and when the viewing window is to be used, if one is present.

Where fitted any windows on the various types of bin lifting mechanisms will continue to be used for their designed purpose as stated by the manufacturer of the various types of bin lift mechanism which are fitted across our fleet of collection vehicles.

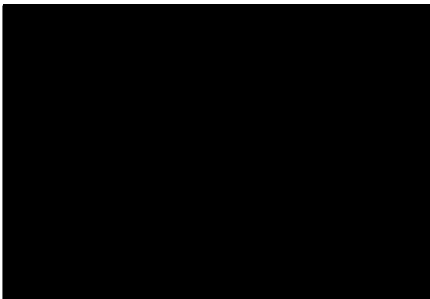
Our operating instructions will be reviewed to reflect that checking the vehicle hopper prior to compaction may not be possible on some configurations of collection vehicle such as the one involved in this case.


As a waste collector with many customers, we take our responsibility to protect people affected by our business and operations seriously. Our deepest sympathies remain with Corrie's family and friends in this tragic case. This terrible incident highlights the wider problem of people seeking shelter in waste containers, an issue we've been actively campaigning on for more than 10 years.

We will continue our efforts to reduce, and raise awareness of, the risks to people in and around bins. We believe that our customers can actively support the management of the risk of people in bins by reporting to us any instances of people suspected or found taking shelter within or around bins at their premises before collections take place. Additionally, we are continuing to develop our relationships with national charities who provide support to rough sleepers. This will build on the existing arrangements we have with Streetlink, who we inform of any incidents involving people in and around bins, so they can initiate their outreach support services.

We hope that our response addresses the concerns raised in your Report.

Yours sincerely  
**For BIFFA WASTE SERVICES LIMITED**



  
Group Health and Safety Director