



Google UK Limited

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Mr Sean Cummings
The Coroner's Office
Civic Offices
1 Saxon Gate East
Milton Keynes
MK9 3EJ

By post and email: [REDACTED]

16 October 2024

Dear Sean Cummings

Regulation 28: Report to Prevent Future Deaths – Tracey Haybittle and Amal Ahmed

We refer to your report dated 22 August 2024 regarding Mrs Haybittle and to your report dated 23 August 2024 regarding Ms Ahmed. This letter serves as a formal response to the queries and points raised within the reports.

Circumstances of death

We are deeply saddened to hear of the tragic circumstances relating to the deaths of Mrs Haybittle and Ms Ahmed.

We understand from the reports that on 20 November 2023, Ms Ahmed's vehicle collided with Mrs Haybittle's vehicle on the A5 adjacent to the Little Brickhill junction. Ms Ahmed died at the scene; Mrs Haybittle died later at the John Radcliffe Hospital. A passenger of one of the vehicles required critical care and suffered life threatening and changing injuries.

The reports indicate that Ms Ahmed appeared to have been using a GPS – or “satnav” – navigation system, but mistakenly entered the “off” slip road at the Little Brickhill junction and drove the wrong way at speed before colliding with Mrs Haybittle. We understand that the junction was painted with “No Entry” on the road surface – along with white, double broken lines (indicating “give way”) – and was flanked by two red “No Entry” road signs. National Highways subsequently undertook a number of measures to prevent other drivers from incorrectly entering the slip road, but observed that drivers frequently continued to do so. Enquiries by the police and information volunteered by members of the public suggested that the audio guidance given by their satnav systems may be confusing drivers into making the incorrect manoeuvre.

Google Maps

Google Maps is a mapping and navigation application provided to users in the UK by Google LLC. It can provide directions for users to travel from one point to another on foot, in a vehicle, by bicycle or by public transport. The application offers directions that can visibly be shown on the user's device and/or offers audio guidance to prepare users for upcoming manoeuvres, and to guide them to the point at which they must turn or make the manoeuvre.



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Safety is core to how Google develops and operates the Google Maps service, and we understand our responsibility to keep our users and other road users safe. We implement a multi-layered approach to ensure navigation instructions are provided safely, including through real-time data updates and algorithm optimisation, user feedback and reporting, and integration with other safety features such as Car Crash Detection on certain Pixel devices. We endeavour to ensure that any audio guidance given by Google Maps serves as a useful tool for drivers, though users must always obey road signs and traffic signals.

Steps taken in response to the reports

We recognise that the cases identified in the reports are tragic. While it is not clear whether Google Maps was involved, we have carefully considered whether there are improvements we can make to Google Maps to help ensure that similar incidents do not occur in future. We have therefore taken the following measures:

- We have liaised with National Highways and reviewed their helpful dashcam footage of the relevant junction. This has assisted our product and engineering teams in carefully investigating the audio guidance provided by Google Maps. Our teams are working on improvements to the timing of the audio guidance.
- As part of these improvements, we anticipate providing enhanced audio guidance in situations such as those in this case. This will involve an amended audio prompt as a driver approaches a junction where they would cross an overpass: "after the overpass, turn right". We hope that this will provide clearer guidance for drivers and help reduce the risk that they make an incorrect turn. Although changes such as these require significant internal validation before they can be launched publicly, we hope to launch them in the near future.

More generally, Google remains committed to continually improving its services to provide helpful navigation services, and we welcome feedback from users which can be submitted through the Google Maps mobile application or website.

Yours faithfully

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