



Mr P Nieto  
His Majesty's Senior Coroner  
The Coroner's Court  
Town Hall  
Rose Hill  
Chesterfield  
Derbyshire  
S40 1LP

Your ref:  
Our ref: CP0063  
Email: [REDACTED]  
Direct line:  
Date: 16 January 2025

Dear Mr Nieto

**Response to Prevention of Future Death ("PFD") report issued on 26 November 2024**

I am formally responding for and on behalf of the National Farmers Union ("NFU") to the PFD report issued by you following the conclusion, on 15 November 2024, of the Inquest touching on the death of Jon-Paul Prigent.

The NFU understands that it was named in the above PFD report, amongst other organisations, on the basis that the NFU is an organisation with the ability to take actions that could potentially help to prevent similar deaths from occurring in the future.

Our understanding from the PFD report is that Mr Prigent tragically died, on 30 July 2020, as a result of a laden trailer decoupling from its towing tractor, and that such decoupling is unlikely to have occurred if the hitch and coupling components had been checked and maintained to a reasonable standard.

The NFU, first and foremost, offers its sincere condolences to Mr Prigent's family and loved ones.

Despite the tragic circumstances, the NFU is grateful to the Senior Coroner for including it in this matter. In its capacity as a Trade Association representing farmers and growers in England and Wales, the NFU welcomes any information that can assist its ongoing work to educate its members in relation to safety matters.

The NFU takes health and safety in the agricultural sector very seriously, as shown, for example, by the NFU's role chairing the Farm Safety Partnership. The NFU also provides information and guidance to its members via a number of routes, including its website, Business Guides and the British Farmer and Grower magazine, as well as a number of electronic newsletters. Although the NFU is primarily a membership organisation, some information on the NFU's website is also accessible to the public, including a number of the NFU's health and safety related features.

The NFU has taken, and continues to take, a number of actions with regard to this specific concern relating to trailer coupling and the wider issue of vehicle maintenance, as I will summarise below.

**NFU safety articles**

The NFU produces and publishes various resources, including safety articles, which are made available to anybody via our website, not just NFU members. Generally, these public facing documents highlight key legal principles of which individuals working in the industry should be aware.



These resources cover various safety-related topics including the importance of completing regular maintenance checks of vehicles and equipment (including tractors and trailers), by competent persons, in accordance with legislation and manufacturer recommendations.

The NFU's consistent message is that *"employers must check and maintain equipment regularly to ensure that it does not deteriorate and become a risk"*.

These resources include express warnings that wear to tractor hooks and trailer towing eyes *"can result in trailer disconnection if not maintained and where necessary replaced"*.

As a direct result of being made aware of the tragic circumstances of Mr Prigent's death, the NFU has published a new article entitled "Agricultural trailer couplings – importance of maintenance", which provides safety information on the specific issue of coupling mechanism maintenance. This article was published at <https://www.nfuonline.com/updates-and-information/agricultural-trailer-couplings/> on 6 January 2025.

Further examples of NFU safety articles can be found via the links listed below:

- <https://www.nfuonline.com/updates-and-information/essential-information-on-farm-transport-and-machinery/#Maintenance>
- <https://www.nfuonline.com/updates-and-information/transport-and-machinery-safety-the-importance-of-maintenance/>
- <https://www.nfuonline.com/updates-and-information/stay-safe-and-stay-legal-this-harvest/>
- <https://www.nfuonline.com/updates-and-information/trailer-buying-guide/>

To supplement our own guidance publications, where appropriate, the NFU's articles also include links to relevant guidance from the Health and Safety Executive including, for example, the leaflet INDG185, 'Using tractors safely, a step-by-step guide' as well as relevant guidance published on GOV.uk. Hard copies of such guidance may also be made available by the NFU at other events where appropriate.

### **NFU checklists**

The NFU makes available checklists that help users to ensure that their vehicle or machinery is correctly and safely maintained. Examples include:

- 'Vehicle Health Check' (<https://www.nfuonline.com/media/glpaoqt0/vehicle-health-check.pdf>); and
- 'General Trained Appliance Health Check' (<https://www.nfuonline.com/media/brwj30yw/general-trailed-appliance-health-check-2.pdf>),

These documents make it clear that it is the responsibility of drivers and owners to make sure that the equipment being used is safe.

The checklists cover a number of items that should regularly be checked (and fixed by a qualified technician where needed) in order to ensure safety. They are designed to be a prompt, with checks to be completed in line with manufacturers' instructions, legislation and industry guidance. The following items are specifically included on the checklists:

- trailer hook wear and lock;
- towing hitches;
- transport locking devices;
- braking systems (including parking and breakaway systems);
- draw bars;
- electrical connections; and
- hydraulic connections (including breakaway systems) and piping.





### **Educating members**

The NFU regularly highlights the importance of tractor and trailer maintenance when communicating with its members. This is often done, for example, within the pages of the NFU's monthly magazines, British Farmer & Grower and Farming Wales. It is also done at various member events that are held throughout the year.

Emphasis is put on the significance of conducting daily checks and the need to ensure that the relevant vehicle, machine or appliance is safe and suitable for the tasks at hand, as per the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998.

The NFU also regularly stresses the importance of equally efficient braking systems, which will reduce wear on the hitch, with failsafe breakaway systems employed whenever hitched to the tractor. We also address the varieties of hitch types and have published some guidance materials around the importance of good maintenance.

The NFU on an annual basis collates and analyses official figures relating to accidents and fatalities that are connected to agriculture. These statistics are shared with the wider membership, with relevant case studies where possible, so as to further evidence the importance of compliance with safety legislation, working in line with manufacturers' regulations, suitable training of the machine and communicate the potential impact of poor maintenance.

Education, of course, never ends and the NFU's efforts to improve safety within the farming community are, and will continue to be, ongoing.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any queries.

Yours sincerely

[Redacted Signature]  
[Redacted Name]  
**Secretary to the NFU**