

Ms Linda Lee

Acting Area Coroner for Warwickshire Coroner Service

[REDACTED]

12 May 2026

Chief Executive

[REDACTED]

Redgrave Court

Merseyside L20 7HS

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Dear Ms Lee,

Thank you for your letter dated 23 March 2026 concerning the inquest into the death of Richard Gary Hopkins and the resulting Regulation 28 Report to Prevent Future Deaths. On behalf of the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), I offer my sincere condolences to Mr Hopkins' family and friends.

Your report raises as matters of concern, that:

- a) There was a previously unrecognised proximity risk associated with visual inspection of pressurised air suspension systems which may result in fatal injury;
- b) There is an absence of guidance addressing component failure during undisturbed inspection;
- c) There are limitations to the non-destructive batch testing of the component in question, namely the suspension trailing arm;
- d) There is a lack of awareness of this pre-delivery inspection phase risk across the sector.

I will address each of these points in turn.

### **Previously unrecognised proximity risk associated with visual inspection of air suspension systems**

It is agreed that this is a previously unrecognised risk as there is no known history of relevant similar incidents associated with component failures of this nature. We are aware of previous incidents involving the failure of air suspension components which have resulted in serious or even fatal injuries. However, the circumstances of those incidents all involved physical interaction with the air suspension system prior to failures occurring. Enquiries with the component manufacturer and the vehicle manufacturer suggest that this is also the only component failure they have experienced in such circumstances.

Under health and safety law, employers are required to manage risks to their employees so far as is “reasonably practicable”. This involves carefully weighing the level of risk against the time, cost and effort required to control it. When assessing the level of risk, it is important to consider not only the potential severity of an outcome, but the likelihood of it occurring.

Our investigation concluded that this instance represented a single, isolated failure involving a component that is manufactured in significant volumes each year. While the potential severity is rightly recognised as high, the available evidence indicates that the likelihood of a similar event occurring is very low.

### **Absence of guidance addressing component failure during undisturbed inspection**

The possibility of component failure on air suspension systems is addressed in a number of HSE documents:

[HSG 261 – Health and safety in motor vehicle repair and associated industries](#) (page 41)

[PM85 – Safe recovery \(and repair\) of buses and coaches fitted with air suspension](#);

[INDG 434 – Working safely under motor vehicles being repaired](#);

[Air suspension systems on vehicles](#) (HSE Website);

[Safety Alert – EPD1 - 2020](#).

This guidance focuses on the risks linked to repair or recovery work on vehicles with air suspension. This reflects the fact that there have been serious and fatal incidents associated with this type of work in the past. Currently, there is no specific guidance covering pre-delivery inspections carried out under vehicles. This is because, before the incident involving Mr Hopkins, evidence of component failure had been limited to situations arising during normal vehicle use.

Following a recent meeting of the Motor Vehicle Repair Forum (MVRF) on the 8<sup>th</sup> of May, MVRF members agreed to review the HSE guidance documents INDG 434, HSG 261 and PM85 with specific consideration for the incident involving Mr Hopkins.

The MVRF is an external stakeholder group comprising a number of trade bodies and associations who, along with HSE, are committed to reducing injuries and ill-health in the motor vehicle sales, repair and recovery sector. We play an active role in the activities of this group.

### **Limitations of batch sample testing**

As the enforcing authority for the safety of components on road-going vehicles, the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) undertook an investigation on the component which failed and tested samples from the same production batch. The findings of this investigation were shared with us during our own investigation, and I

understand that no further concerns were raised by DVSA over the component design or the manufacturing/testing process.

**Lack of awareness of this inspection phase risk across the sector**

We have worked with stakeholder groups including the MVRF to raise awareness of the circumstances of this incident and the findings of both the Inquest and our own investigation. We will continue to explore opportunities to raise awareness of this risk in relevant industry sectors going forward.

I hope this response is of use, and fully addresses the concerns you have raised that fall into the remit of the Health and Safety Executive.

Yours sincerely,



Chief Executive