

Press release: Safety warning following seven gritter crashes in North West

Motorway drivers are being urged to take extra care around gritters this winter following seven collisions in the North West.

Highways England has issued the warning after 36 of its vehicles were struck on motorways and major A roads across the country last winter.

Gritter driver Garry White was spreading salt on the M57 near junction 6 at Kirkby in March this year when his vehicle was struck from behind by a Ford Focus travelling at high speed. The car was written off and the back of the gritter also received extensive damage, requiring repairs.

Garry, 43 from Runcorn, suffered minor injuries and was off work for several days following the collision. He said:

The psychological impact was quite bad to be honest and I didn't want to get back in a wagon for a few weeks after it happened. Experience prevails, and you push on and you get back in, but both me and the car driver were lucky not to have sustained much worse injuries.

I'd ask drivers to give us as wide a birth as possible this winter and to stay behind us until we've finished our treatment if they can as it's much safer. Usually you'll find a gritter will only be doing a few motorway junctions before pulling off anyway.

Gritters have flashing amber beacons, are 2.5 metres wide and are bright orange but causes of collisions have included drivers misjudging the amount of space needed to overtake them or driving too close to them when they are spreading salt.

The vehicles, which each weigh up to 26 tonnes, usually travel at 40mph in the middle lane to ensure the right amount of salt is spread to all lanes.

The back of a gritter is the most vulnerable area as it is where the salt spreading equipment is located. If it is struck then it can mean the gritter has to be taken off the road to be repaired, which is costly and could affect critical services in extreme weather conditions.

Andrew Olive, Highways England's North West severe weather manager, said:

The vast majority of drivers support our gritter drivers by leaving a sensible distance and only passing when it's safe to do so, but

we do have occasions when people misjudge the situation and end up colliding with one of our vehicles.

The driver of the Ford Focus was lucky not to be more seriously injured in the incident on the M57 earlier this year, and gritter drivers like Garry should be able to do their job without having to worry about whether other vehicles might strike them.

Our gritter drivers perform a vital role to keep motorways and major A roads moving during the winter so I'd urge drivers to take extra care when travelling near them.

During severe winter weather drivers are urged to follow this advice:

- In snow and ice: Drivers should stick to the main roads where they can and only travel if necessary. Drivers are also encouraged to make sure they have a winter kit in their vehicle, including an ice scraper and de-icer, warm clothes and blankets and sunglasses to cope with the low winter sun.
- In high winds: Drivers should slow down and avoid using exposed sections of road if possible. Lorries, caravans and motorbikes are at particular risk.
- In heavy rain: Drivers should keep well back from the vehicle in front, gradually ease off the accelerator if the steering becomes unresponsive, and slow down if the rain and spray from vehicles makes it difficult to see and be seen.
- In fog: Drivers should switch on their fog lights and not use lights on full beam as the fog will reflect the light back. If drivers really cannot see, they should consider stopping until it is safe to continue.

General enquiries

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

Media enquiries

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.

[Press release: Search to find Cyber Security experts of the future](#)

Success of Cyber Discovery scheme will see programme extended to Scotland and Northern Ireland

Press release: Search to find Cyber Security experts of the future

An online programme designed to inspire teenagers to think about a career in cyber security will continue for a second year after a successful pilot across England.

Over 23,000 young people aged between 14 and 18 have already taken part in the Cyber Discovery programme which uses interactive games to teach teenagers about cyber security in an accessible and fun way. Those who perform at the highest levels, will also have the opportunity to attend a special summer camp to hone their skills and meet industry leaders.

The scheme sits within Cyber First, the government's cyber security skills programme, which is part of the £1.9 billion investment through the National Cyber Security Strategy to transform the UK's cyber security and ensure we build skills in the workforce of the future.

Minister for Digital Margot James said:

We need to inspire young people and show them a career in Cyber Security can be exciting and rewarding, not only to give them more opportunities but also help build a talented workforce for the future. The Cyber Discovery programme has been a great success so far. I hope more teenagers will take part and learn that those working in cyber security can come from any walk of life, and have studied any subject.

The £20 million Cyber Discovery programme teaches students about subjects including digital forensics, defending against web attacks and cryptography. It is being delivered by IT security training company the SANS Institute.

The programme is also a key part of the government's modern Industrial Strategy – a long term plan to ensure that businesses have the skilled workers they need here in Britain.

Head of Research and Development for SANS Institute James Lyne said:

Based on the success of last year's Cyber Discovery programme, it's clear there's both the appetite and the aptitude to learn about cyber security in the UK. Before taking part in Cyber Discovery 40.4% of female students and 35.5% of male students hadn't even considered a career in cyber security. This dropped to 9.6% and 6.3% respectively after these students took part in the programme. And many of the club leaders who are also Computer Science

teachers, told us they used Cyber Discovery last year to complement their lesson plans. We hope to extend this enthusiasm and passion for cyber security across the the UK in year two.

Any young person between the ages of 14 to 18 can take part. Registration and completion of the first assessment phase closes on 7 January 2019. Find out more on the [Cyber Discovery website](#).

Further Information:

1. The Government is committed to ensuring that the UK has a sustainable pipeline of cyber security talent supporting a workforce that meets current and future cyber security demands and supports the UK's prosperity by keeping the economy and the country safe from cyber threats.
 2. The [National Cyber Security Strategy](#) commits to developing and implementing 'a self-standing skills strategy that builds on existing work to integrate cyber security into the education system. This will continue to improve the state of computer science teaching overall and embed cybersecurity into the curriculum. Everyone studying computer science, technology or digital skills will learn the fundamentals of cyber security and will be able to bring those skills into the workforce. As part of this effort, we will address the gender imbalance in cyber-focused professions, and reach people from more diverse backgrounds, to make sure we are drawing from the widest available talent pool.
 3. SANS Institute was established in 1989 as a cooperative research and education organisation and is now the largest provider of cyber security training and certification to practitioners at governments and commercial institutions worldwide. The SANS curriculum spans more than 60 courses across multiple cyber security disciplines. SANS has successfully run programmes for school age students and is passionate about encouraging young people to pursue a career in cyber security.
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