Preventing Vehicle Rollaways: Vans

1. Introduction

The PCSA recognises that vehicle rollaways involve all vehicle types. This single page guide is in addition to the main PCSA Vehicle Rollaway guidance and is specifically aimed at smaller vehicles from cars and car-derived vans up to large panel vans.

Many vehicle manufacturers are starting to install electronic park brake (EPB) systems in their vehicles and this will be a substantial step forward, but these are not yet commonplace in the commercial vans. Whilst mechanical failures of the handbrake system can and do occur, they are limited, particularly when the vehicle is suitably maintained and quality parts are used. This guidance focuses on the main cause of vehicle rollaways and the need for drivers to adopt and embed safe parking practice each and every time.

2. The [Fallible] Handbrake

The effectiveness of the handbrake, excluding mechanical failure and contracting braking discs during cooling, is dependent on the driver; and whilst parking locations e.g. gradients play a part, the primary consideration is the forces applied by the driver when engaging the handbrake, all of which can be affected by the driver's perception of the risk i.e. big hill versus a level ground, the driver's physical characteristics and technique.

3. Safe Parking Practice

The Highway Code [252] states when parking on a hill…

1. **H**andbrake: apply handbrake firmly
2. **I**n Gear: select a forward gear [1st], reverse if facing downhill or Park if the vehicle has an automatic gearbox
3. **T**urn Wheels: away from the kerb or towards the kerb if facing downhill.

The Highway Code does not define a hill, so adopting this safe method of parking each and every time, no matter whether parking on a hill or not, so that it becomes a habit will drastically reduce vehicle rollaways and the associated loss of life, life changing injuries, property damage and associated costs.

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