Fatal incident while coupling a tractor unit to a trailer prompts HSE to issue warning

WHAT HAPPENED

The HSE has urged drivers and operators to take steps to prevent truck runaway incidents when coupling and uncoupling trailers.

The warning follows the case at Sevenoaks Magistrates' Court on 24 May when driver Anthony Steven Smith, of Porthcawl, was given a 12-week suspended prison sentence and a 12-month driving ban after admitting causing death by careless driving and a breach of the Health and Safety at Work Act.

The case resulted from an incident when Smith was delivering materials to a roadwork site on the A21 in Kent. While coupling the tractor unit to a trailer, it rolled backwards into another vehicle, crushing 20-year-old road worker Dale Pentney and causing fatal head injuries.

A joint investigation by Kent Police and the HSE found that Smith failed to apply the parking brake of the tractor before he left it and that he also failed to follow recognised industry coupling procedures.

An HSE spokesman said: "This was a tragic and avoidable accident and HSE's sympathies are extended to the Pentney family. Sadly, it shows how dangerous situations can develop quickly. "These coupling and uncoupling incidents – known as 'runaways' or 'rollaways' – are all too common.

LEARNING POINTS / ACTIONS TAKEN

Many vehicles are fitted with visual and audible parking brake warning alarms, and if they are not fitted, hauliers should consider retrofitting them to their tractor units as the HSE considers it reasonably practicable to do so. These alarms must never be ignored.

Drivers must ensure they correctly apply the tractor unit parking brake before exiting the cab and then follow safe decoupling and coupling procedures.

Based on article from Commercial Motor

LOCATION:	**ON-HIGHWAY**	**ALERT STATUS:**	**Normal**
ACTIVITY:	**TRANSPORT & LOGISTICS / DELIVERY**	**DATE ISSUED:**	**22/06/2016 16:22:43**
SUB ACTIVITY:	**LOADING**	**INCIDENT No:**	**01434**