

Shared Learning

Critical Risk: Vehicles



Utility Vehicle Brake Failure

What happened?

A Service Provider employee was driving through an urban area in a utility vehicle, towing a trailer and ATV. As the vehicle approached a pedestrian crossing, a child riding a bicycle crossed without looking, causing the driver to brake hard. At this point the vehicle brakes failed, and the driver was forced to apply the handbrake to stop. There were no injuries as a result of the incident and the vehicle was recovered and sent for immediate inspection and repair.

North Island (South)

Investigation findings

- The mechanical inspection found that wear and tear on the brakes had been accelerated by the environment the vehicle operates in, and the abrasive nature of dust which had built up around the brake pads.
- The vehicle was found to be 60 kg over its Gross Vehicle Mass (GVM)*. The vehicle being overweight was not considered to be a contributing factor to the incident
- Other mechanical inspections on all vehicles exposed to similar harsh environments, revealed no signs of brake problems.

Corrective Actions

- Ensure that the undercarriage of the vehicle is thoroughly washed and cleaned regularly to avoid contamination and degradation of the brakes.
- Check that your vehicle's GVM is not exceeded and that weight is distributed evenly for safe and efficient operation. Refer to the vehicle manufacturer's handbook for guidance.
- Be alert when driving past parked vehicles or roadside stalls as pedestrians may walk out without warning.