



Department for Transport

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18 May 2020

Andrew A Haigh
Senior Coroner
Staffordshire (South) Coroner's Jurisdiction
Coroner's Office, 1 Staffordshire Place
Stafford
ST16 2LP

By email

[██████████.gov.uk](mailto:██████████@gov.uk)

Dear Mr Haigh,

Thank you for your Regulation 28 report dated 18 February, sent to the Department for Transport following the conclusion of your inquest into the death of Liam Anthony Clark. I am also grateful for a copy of the summary police report that you provided subsequently on 20 April. I am replying as Head of International Vehicle Standards division, which leads for the Department on vehicle construction standards.

You found that the evidence considered during your inquest revealed two matters of concern. The first related to the absence of vehicle signage indicating the extent to which the boom of the crop sprayer protruded beyond the rear of the vehicle, and the second related to potential improvements in driver training.

The summary police report gave the vehicle registration mark of the crop sprayer as W56STT. Publicly available information held on the GOV.UK website confirmed this as a Bateman Model RB16 first registered in June 2000. The RB16 is a discontinued model and limited technical information is available. It has been possible to identify the overall vehicle dimensions, but not the extent of any overhang or rearward projection, both of which may influence the extent of tail-swing, which has been implicated by the police in the outcome of this collision.

It is worth noting in this context that overhang is a feature of nearly all vehicles and is essentially the distance between the rear axle and the rearmost point of the vehicle, excluding any load or appliance. The rearward projection is the distance by which a load or appliance extends beyond the rearmost point of the vehicle and in this case comprised part of the crop sprayer's boom.

Domestic regulations limit the extent of overhang and also require rearward projections exceeding 1m to be rendered clearly visible. The exact requirements are dependent on the extent of projection, with those exceeding 3.05m requiring marking and a person to accompany the vehicle, other than the driver, to provide added safety. These provisions are intended to increase awareness of other road users to a potential risk from a significant rearward projection. It will of course always remain the responsibility of drivers of other vehicles to assess the extent of any potential hazard and determine appropriate action.

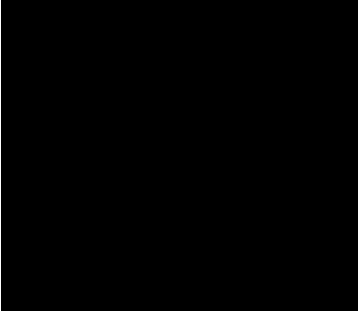
In this case, it does appear that the deceased failed to appropriately assess the potential risk of the manoeuvring crop sprayer but the Department is not aware of significant evidence to suggest that a change in the requirements regarding improved identification of rearward projections would have prevented this collision.

It does however, as you have indicated, raise potential issues around driver behaviour and training. It is worth noting that the Highway Code already sets out the standards of driving expected in a range of situations. For example, Rules 163 and 221 covers overtaking on the left and allowing extra space to allow large vehicles to turn respectively.

We have engaged with colleagues from the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency as they lead on driver training standards. They have noted the detail of your inquest and have agreed to review the advice in their official learning materials and consider the creation of a specific hazard perception clip covering tail-swing for the driver theory test covering all vehicle types.

Furthermore, we will raise the marking of projections with the National Farmers' Union of England and Wales and the National Farmers Union of Scotland to remind them of the need to provide and maintain warning signs where these are required.

I hope you find this information helpful and are assured that the Department and its agencies are taking appropriate action to respond to your concerns.



Head of International Vehicle Standards