

SAFETY ALERT

375 - Vehicle incident while travelling to work

Background

A PFM worker was driving from home to work at around 5am on a rural road with a 100 km/h speed limit. The worker travelled this route every day; however, winter conditions, darkness, and the lack of street lighting made visibility poor.

As the worker approached a gentle bend, they slowed down. Due to the limited visibility and unclear road markings, the worker mistakenly followed the grass verge on the side of the road instead of the road itself. This caused the vehicle to leave the road, enter a private driveway, and strike a farmer's fence.

The worker got out of the vehicle to check for damage and found damage to the front bumper and bonnet. Fortunately, the worker was not injured. As the vehicle was still able to be driven, the worker returned home and parked it before reporting the incident.



Safety Issues

- Driving in dark, early morning conditions with reduced visibility
- No street lighting on the rural road
- Limited or unclear road markings, making it harder to identify the road edge and alignment
- Ice road conditions, reducing tyre grip and increasing stopping distances
- Route familiarity may have contributed to driving on 'autopilot' rather than actively assessing the road conditions
- Potential effects of early morning fatigue or reduced alertness

RECOMMENDED WAYS TO CONTROL RISK

- **Familiar routes still require full attention.** Driving the same road every day can lead to complacency and reduces awareness of changing hazards.
- **Take extra care during low-light conditions.** Darkness reduces visual cues and can increase reliance on habit rather than observation.
- **Increase vigilance and scan further ahead** to maintain focus on the roadway
- **Use high-beam headlights** where safe and appropriate
- **Check weather and road conditions** before travelling

Even when driving a familiar route, conditions can change from day to day. Stay focused, drive to the conditions, and avoid relying on memory or habit when visibility and road conditions are poor.

For more information contact: safety@programmed.com.au

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Report all incidents and near misses

Please display on Safety Noticeboards and raise this matter at the next Toolbox Talk or Safety Meeting.