



**Report: Road Traffic Collision 040216, 0150hrs M6 Northbound, J5 – J6 (Inc. 53)**

At 0150hrs a road traffic collision occurred on the M6 northbound J5–J6 involving two HGV's and one car. The accident resulted in a fatality; therefore police forensic investigation was necessary. Initially the northbound carriageway and 2 lanes of the southbound carriageway were closed to accommodate this. At 08:52hrs the police handed the carriageway back to Highways England. No access to the scene was permitted by Police until their investigation was completed. This was confirmed to be appropriate by the Central Motorways Policing Group Superintendent at the debrief. This accounts for the first several crucial hours of the incident and was instrumental in creating the difficult traffic conditions which ensued.

The carriageway was re-opened at 01:47hrs 5<sup>th</sup> February meaning that the duration of the closure was almost 24hrs. This appears exceptional however, when considering the complexities involved in terms of initial scene stabilisation, police forensic investigations, deceased victim recovery, vehicle recoveries, assessment of the asset, the logistics involved in mobilisation of resources to repair the damage – 320tonnes of materials via 16 trucks were needed to access the scene through a gridlocked network – the repair necessary, the removal of traffic management and ensuring safety for road users, the timeline is not unreasonable.

Regional Alert was declared at 1106hrs. The first RACG (Regional Alert Coordination Group) took place at 11:45hrs and five subsequent RACGs were held with the aim of sharing information in a timely manner in order to make decisions and resolve the incident expediently and as soon as practicable. Regional Alert stood down at 23:45hrs.

During each RACG teleconference, information was gathered, options for resolution explored and decisions were made based on the facts as they were known at the time. Some of the main options considered included:

- allowing running on the contaminated surface but this was eventually dismissed as the level of risk remained unclear both in terms of safety and also because there was a chance that this could cause additional damage which would ultimately result in a longer future closures to complete further repairs. Also timing was a consideration and it was thought a high likelihood that the carriageway would require re-closure before the existing traffic had cleared and before rush hour;
- another option was to allow running on a planed surface but again it was unknown at the time how far the fuel spillage had seeped into the carriageway, whether it had reached sub base and therefore how far earlier reparation would actually assist . It was also discussed whether this option would be of any benefit as again taking traffic management off and planing the surface would have rendered any benefit time-wise, ineffective (rush hour traffic would still have been affected);
- consideration was given to establishing Operation Freeway (suspension of tolls on the Midland Expressway) but initial thoughts were that the benefits to the travelling

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public would be minimal whilst the costs would be high (£350,000 +VAT for 24hrs of operation) This was borne out as historical traffic flow data indicates that the vast majority of people who could have benefitted from using the M6 Toll - approx. 15,000 additional motorists - chose to pay and so the vast majority of persons delayed by the incident could not have completed their journey via the use of the M6 Toll as they needed to get to locations that this option does not serve.

From 0204hrs and throughout the duration of the incident, Highways England were pro-actively engaging with both social media platforms and with the broadcast media, ensuring communications with the public were timely, accurate and informative. There was also good liaison with the Local Authority regarding direction for traffic to use the 'Agreed Diversion Routes' which are already signed in the area.

A multi-agency incident debrief took place on Wed 10<sup>th</sup> Feb during which positive comments were made particularly about collaborative / partnership working and how co-operation across agencies assisted in the timely resolution to the incident: one example of this was our supply chain vehicles being unable to access the scene due to traffic issues and our coordination with Police to brigade and escort these vehicles under blue lights. A number of recommendations (16) have been identified and Highways England and our partners are keen to ensure implementation of the lessons identified.

A final comment worthy of note is that despite having identified a number of efficiencies and lessons through the debrief process, the best estimate at the debrief suggests that due to the complex nature of this incident we could not realistically have expected to restore carriageway capacity before 23:30hrs at the earliest rather than 01:47hrs.

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**Combined Summary timeline:**

West Midlands Police

Highways England

01:50 - Log created

01:50 – Police control room notified – Command & Control Log commenced.

01:53 - 30's set / S5797A – S5805A / Accident

02:00 – OT94 arrives – CMPG Patrol

02:02 – Regional Control Centre (RCC) set tactical signs back to J3 M6

02:04 – National Incident Liaison Officers (NILO) - Initial tweet issued on WM feed

02:04 – RCC set tactical signs on M42 back to J6 on N/B and J9 on S/B

02:06 – Verbally confirmed as fatal by CMPG

02:09 – Officers at the scene confirm fatality

02:09 – Total closure sigs set at S5782A M6, LDL (Lane divert left) set over LBS3 LBS4 at S5776A, M6

02:09 – CMPG request LBS4C on S/B and incident screens

02:12 – Fire and Rescue Services confirmed attending

02:13 – WN41 RRB (Rolling road block) on p171/5a

02:14 – NILO – Non critical report raised and issued to media

02:15 – CMPG also putting RRB on at J5 M6

02:16 - OT23 closes J5 – CMPG Patrol

02:16 – WT52 ARRIVED (on road TM)

02:16 – Trapped traffic back to J5

02:17 – Ambulance arrive

02:18 – Operations Manager advised

02:21 - Fire and Rescue at J5

02:22 – LBS3C LBS4C set at S5789B – 5782B M6

02:25 - TV14 arrives – CMPG Supervision

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02:25 – NILO upgraded to critical incident (C9), HE senior personnel advised, breaking news set and tweeted on WM feed.

02:29 - CMPG Collision Investigation Unit (CIU) called out from home

02:29 – Closure on M6 at J5 in place – all traffic off at J5

02:31 – Decision to open LBS1 S/B J6/5 to allow traffic to run in 2 lanes, but only once closure is out

02:33 - Life pronounced extinct

02:53 – NILO advised of diversion route

02:55 – S/B backlog of traffic cleared

03:07 – M6 NB level of service boards (Toll VMS) set to reflect NTIC's signing

S5626A & 5642A - M6 J5-6 CLOSED, M6 TOLL CLEAR

03:11 – Police anticipate closure being on for approx. 3hrs

03:23 - CIU arrive at scene (arrived within one hour service level agreement)

04:48 – All trapped traffic cleared on NB

05:45 – CH8 installed on S/B

05:50 – CH8 installed on N/B

05:58 – Dignity Funeral Services requested

06:16 - Mansfield vehicle recovery requested

06:31 - Formal request for forensic recovery of vehicles.

06:35 – CMPG advised full forensic lift arranged for both vehs on North Bound

06:42 – CMPG SGT – body still to be extracted – recovery to take place after this – possible reopening at 07:30

06:50 – AREA9 updated with estimated reopening time and to have units ready to remove the closure

06:54 - Forensic reconstruction complete

07:02 – AREA9 advised no crews available until after 8AM – Duty OM updated

07:03- Mansfield arrived at scene awaiting recovery and removal of deceased from scene.

07:12 – SB congestion 15.8km

07:26 - Dignity arrived and removed the body.

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07:28 - Recovery commenced.

07:34 – WT20 – All lanes affected by oil – cway needs to remain closed

07:35 – M40 FTMS boards set to advise drivers to use the M42/M5/M6 – S9660A / S9673A / S9678A / S9681A / S9689A / S9697A

07:37 – WT20 – Also a fuel spill onto the SB cway – LBS3 & LBS4

07:54 – M6 N/B congestion – 9.6km

07:55 – M42 running ok

07:56 – M6 S/B congestion 18.1km

07:56 – M5 N/B congestion 10.6km

**08:47 - Scene handed over to HE**

08:52 – CMPG left scene \*\*HE scene\*\*

09:02 – Recovery complete for truck

09:23 – South Bound closure lifted – TSO needs to get boards out of LBS1

09:37 – Looking at 10:00 for opening

10:04 – WT20 oil not lifting from main cway - LBS3/4 may need a full resurface

11:02 – Safety concern for cway state – AREA9 duty manager Richard Hancox advised by OM that we are not setting speeds to run traffic through with there being safety concerns - OM will escalate to Gary Webb

11:06 - \*\*REGIONAL ALERT\*\*

11:45 – TELECONFERENCE

11:52 – WT20 – AREA9 advised total resurface required

12:15 – From teleconference – AREA9 confirm the cway is not safe to open - no eta for resurface

13:21 – R.Hancox – planers to make from j5 to plane all 4 lanes – AREA9 crews to meet at Perry Barr 14:30 – no eta for reopening

17:23 – ETA for reopening 22:00

19:56 – RCC request NTIC to set VMS along the lines of 'for M6N use M42 AND M5 – NTIC advise already set

20:16 – NILO reported challenges faced at scene due to amount of tarmac required – tweeted all profiles, afternoon and evening, above normal

20:34 – NILO 19 TWEETS sent so far

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21:00 – All area9 trucks on scene

21:00 – All incident access lanes reopened – LBS40 S5755A – 5761A LBS30 LBS40  
5771A

21:04 – Resurfacing complete – awaiting white liner

23:00 – TELECONFERENCE - Road workers veh stuck in traffic

23:20 - \*\*\*NO LONGER AT REGIONAL ALERT\*\*\*\*

23:49 – White liner on scene - eta for reopening 01:00

01:47 – WN11 traffic now moving N/B under controlled RRB

01:53 – WN11 traffic released

02:05 – NILO – Positive VMS set advising road open / final tweet sent and media and  
stakeholders advised

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