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**INLAND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE**

World Forum for Harmonization of Vehicle Regulations (WP.29)

Working Party on Brakes and Running Gear (GRRF)

Sixtieth session

Geneva, 18–22 September 2006

Item 5.7. of the provisional agenda

**EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION ON NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL  
REQUIREMENTS ON PRIMARY SAFETY**

Submitted by the experts from United Kingdom

Note: The text reproduced below was prepared by the expert from the United Kingdom in order to solicit the views and experiences from other GRRF experts in relation to accidents occurring whilst coupling and un-coupling motor vehicle and their trailer combinations.

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Note: This document is distributed to the Experts on Brakes and Running Gear only.

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REQUEST FOR INFORMATION RELATING TO COUPLING AND UN-COUPLING  
OF MOTOR VEHICLE AND TRAILER COMBINATIONS

The United Kingdom is keen to receive any information from other Contracting Parties on the subject of coupling and un-coupling of motor vehicle and trailer combinations.

In the United Kingdom, it is common practice for truck drivers to leave the tractor unit with its engine running and the parking brake not applied when coupling or uncoupling the air lines to the trailer. There have been fatal and serious accidents due to incorrect coupling/un-coupling procedures employed by drivers.

Accidents occur during coupling up because it is usual for trailers to be parked on the "emergency" brake by disconnecting the emergency airline ("dropping the red line") rather than by applying the trailer parking brake. The emergency brakes are applied under air pressure when the emergency air line is disconnected from the semi-trailer. Air pressure will inevitably leak from the braking system over time and loss of air pressure can affect the ability of the emergency brakes to hold the semi-trailer in its parked position.

Drivers and others have also been injured when they were hit or run over by semi-trailers which were left parked. These accidents occurred because the semi-trailer ran away or moved on a slope because its parking brake was not applied when it was disconnected from the towing vehicle. Sometimes, movement occurred after the semi-trailer had been parked for a substantial period of time.

In addition, this method of using the "emergency" brake as a parking brake is an unsafe practice because connecting the air lines to a parked semi-trailer, when its traditional parking brake is not applied, releases its brakes under air pressure and the vehicle combination can then move, particularly on an incline. This has resulted in drivers being run over by the moving vehicle; or crushed between the vehicle and another object (often as they attempt to get into the moving tractor cab to apply the parking brake).

The United Kingdom is in the process of investigating this issue and would be grateful for any information regarding problems/accidents happening during the coupling/un-coupling process or any solutions that may have assisted in reducing the problem.

Please e-mail any relevant information to: [lawrence.thatcher@dft.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:lawrence.thatcher@dft.gsi.gov.uk) or address to:

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