

# SAFETY BULLETIN

## Mercedes Benz Sprinter – Driving in Floodwater Risk

2022\_53\_WHS

### Summary of the issue

There have been instances where Mercedes Sprinter Light Storm Vehicles have been driven into floodwater and have become stuck, putting vehicle crew at risk and requiring a flood rescue for the crew and recovery of the vehicle.

### Nature of the hazard

The Mercedes Benz Sprinter Light Storm Vehicle (GENs 1 – 4) and other variants (vans) have a computer located at the bottom of the automatic transmission. The transmission computer is positioned 50cm above ground level. This computer controls the gear change functions of the transmission.

Driving into floodwaters of more than 50cm will submerge computer and will cause it to fail. The vehicle will then not change gears and become stranded. Members and passengers may become stuck in floodwater, requiring rescue. If the water level rises suddenly, this may place all members and passengers at extreme risk.

### Action now required

- Drivers should avoid driving a Mercedes Sprinter in floodwater.
- Do not drive a Mercedes Sprinter into floodwater that is deeper than the centre of the axle and always below the height of the side sill and body. The centre of the wheel/axle height is 35cm above ground level.
- Extra care is required if passing or being passed by other vehicles, to avoid high bow waves washing across the transmission computer.
- At all times, NSW vehicles and drivers should follow the provision of the [Safe Driver Guideline](#)
- Where they may be an occasion to drive through flood water, for example to assist in a flood rescue situation, the following should be considered:
  - NSW SES vehicles and drivers should follow the provision of the Safe Driver Guideline
  - NSW SES vehicles and drivers should follow the requirements of Flood Rescue Field Procedure 3.6 NSW SES Motor Vehicles [Flood Rescue Field Procedure](#)
  - All drivers are to ensure a documented risk assessment is undertaken prior to entering flood water, including:
    - Is there an alternative?
    - Can you see the bottom of the road/ground surface below the flood water (e.g. potentially washed-out culvert, subsident of the road surface)?

- Is there potential for a deeper section to sweep you off the road (e.g. on a bridge or causeway)?
- Is the water moving fast?
- What is your vehicle type and the specifications for “wading “depth of your vehicle? Refer to the Fleet Asset Product Description Cards for your specific vehicle

- WORKING SAFELY
- Do you require an appropriately trained and qualified person to walk in front of the vehicle whilst driving through flood waters?
- In a life-critical situation, if there are no other alternatives, drive in the middle of the road (highest point).
- Stop or take extreme care if you cannot see the lane markings, as this may indicate deep water or changes in road surface, such as where the road has washed away.
- Refer to Working Safely document: Driving in Flood Waters if roadway flooded.
- Report all incidents via 1800 SES OHS (1800 737 647).

### **Contact for more information**

Should you require additional information, please contact the Fleet Team at [fleet@ses.nsw.gov.au](mailto:fleet@ses.nsw.gov.au)

### **Authorised by:**

**Sarah Crawford, Director People & Development**

**Sean Kearns, State Duty Commander**

**17/11/2022**