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Wolverhampton Mail Centre Loading Bay Roof Collapse:

To: All Branches

Dear Colleagues,

This is a brief report to Branches in response to enquiries received in relation to the above.

The Wolverhampton Mail Centre Warehouse Loading Bay Roof collapsed on Friday night at around 9:45pm.

What normally is a very busy area was at the time deserted due to the bad weather conditions preventing normal operations in the area and fortunately there were as such no casualties by sheer luck. The roof section came down on ten of the Mail Centre's fleet of 7.5 tonne vehicles which remain in situ, in a cordoned off area and are in effect are holding up the collapsed roof for approximately two thirds of its length whilst plans are made to remove the damaged roof and then safely extract the vehicles from beneath it. The end section of the roof came down, virtually to the ground, on top of smaller vehicles which were severely damaged. The fallen roof also impacted the traffic office.

It is thought that the heavy snow fall caused a huge build up on the roof and the weight of snow on the roof was the cause of its collapse but an investigation has been launched involving expert structural engineers in order to determine the exact cause.

The fire service and structural engineers examined the building in the aftermath and determined that there is no risk of further collapse whilst further detailed structural engineering investigations take place.

The CWU National Health, Safety and Environment Officer visited the Mail Centre shortly after the incident and discussions have been taking place with the Director of Property Risk, Compliance & Assurance, the Head of Safety Health & Environment and Operational Management about the incident and what needs to be done.

Royal Mail Property, Royal Mail Opps and Royal Mail Group SHE have been working over the weekend and this week with specialist construction experts and structural survey engineers, firstly to ensure the area affected is suitably cordoned off such that access is prevented and that there is no further risk to staff at the site. This was the primary focus of the initial period following the incident.

The area of the collapse is now secured and cordoned off and remains out of bounds to all personnel whilst contingency arrangements have been put in place to keep operations going at the Mail Centre as best they can in alternative areas.

The next steps for RM Property & Facilities includes an in depth investigation into the root cause of the structural failure. This will take time and the intention is to make sure it is done thoroughly and the cause of the collapse is fully understood.

The removal work will only commence once input has been received from structural engineers and safety specialists as to the safest way to remove the canopy roof and the vehicles trapped beneath. All work will be done in accordance with the Construction Design Management (CDM) Regulations and will have the support of the RM Property Team throughout.

Plans will then be drawn up and initiated to clear the area and carry out any safety checks and works to stabilise the area and to ensure no danger exists before removal of debris and any necessary demolition works commence.

Following that any temporary repairs and fix will be considered and subsequently permanent remedial construction works longer term will be progressed.

RM Property has fully acknowledged the severity of the incident and the root cause analysis that must now be undertaken. When more information is available, the Health, Safety & Environment Department at CWU/HQ will be updated on the findings.

Locally, the CWU Area Safety Rep and other branch officials have been and will continue to be briefed and consulted and will be fully involved ongoing as the remedial action planning to get things put right is developed with the appointed specialist contractors.

The CWU National Health, Safety and Environment Officer has also contacted the HSE and has called for the incident to be formally reported to the HSE and declared as a Dangerous Occurrence.

This could have been a very different situation and outcome had drivers been in their vehicles and other staff been working on, in and around the loading bay area and in the yard. Therefore we have called for a thorough, full structural survey and investigation into the construction of this area and the rest of the building and other Royal Mail buildings, to ensure there are no recurrences.

Attachment:

Photographs of the collapsed roof at Wolverhampton MC

Yours sincerely



Dave Joyce
National Health, Safety & Environment Officer