THE ROAD SURFACE TREATMENTS ASSOCIATION
GUIDANCE ON ROAD SKID RESISTANCE
POLICY/STRATEGY

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Contents
Document Information .................................................................................................................................3
Document History ........................................................................................................................................3
1. Skidding Resistance Policy ....................................................................................................................4
2. Responsibilities .........................................................................................................................................6
  2.1. Legal Responsibilities ..........................................................................................................................6
  2.2. Roles and Responsibilities ....................................................................................................................7
Document Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title (Sub-Title)</th>
<th>Road Skid Resistance Policy/Strategy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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</tbody>
</table>

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<table>
<thead>
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<th>Author</th>
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<th>Changes from Previous Version</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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1. Skidding Resistance Policy/Strategy

Councils are responsible for maintaining the local road network, containing strategic roads which are subject to a skidding resistance survey.

Skid resistance is an important property relating to the safety of highway users, particularly in damp or wet conditions. Over the course of a road’s life the surface can lose some of its characteristics associated with grip. Effective maintenance of the highway network includes the requirement to systematically monitor the skid resistance of the road surface and to take a proactive approach so that the skid resistance across the network is maintained to an appropriate standard.

The Policy/Strategy takes an Asset Management approach to managing skidding resistance and puts a greater emphasis on engineering assessment.

The objective of the Skid Resistance Policy/Strategy is to:

- Enable the public to travel safely and easily
- Enable the Council to robustly defend against claims
- Reduce the number of killed or seriously injured due to accidents on the Council’s road network
- Ensure the Council adheres to its duty of care under the Highways Act 1980
- Ensure the Council has adequate defence in a Corporate Manslaughter case as either the Authority or its Chief Officer

To achieve this the Council will:

- Formalise processes for monitoring skid resistance across the Council’s road network on an ongoing basis
- Identify deficient sites using skid resistance survey methods for further investigation
- Use accident data on sites identified for further investigation to determine whether inadequate skidding resistance could be a factor
- Recommend appropriate actions to negate risks
- Prioritise Skid deficient sites for improvement works based on where the greatest risks lie
- Ensure improvements to Skid deficient sites are incorporated into the annual highway maintenance works programme

A supplementary document, the Skidding Resistance Procedure has been produced to provide a step by step approach to identifying skid deficient sites and sets out a process for deciding on their subsequent treatment, and how this will be prioritised, taking into account budget and programme considerations. The procedures in the Skidding Resistance Procedure sets out a long-term strategy to manage the skid resistance of the Council’s network to a consistent and safe level. The procedure complements the Council’s Highway Asset Management Strategy, which looks to manage assets in a strategic way.
In 2015 Highways England published an updated comprehensive methodology for managing carriageway skid resistance on motorways and trunk roads and this is set out in their design bulletin, HD 28/15.

The methodology detailed in HD 28/15 forms a basis for the Council’s Skid Resistance Procedure. However, this is adapted to reflect local needs and resource constraints.

In summary, the procedure is as follows:

- Skid resistance surveys will be undertaken annually on defined parts of the highway network which are referred to as the SCRIM network based on hierarchy and traffic flows. This is detailed in Appendix 3 of the Skidding Resistance Procedure.
- The defined network will be assigned Investigatory Levels depending on a range of factors such as the speed limit and geometry of the road. This is detailed in Chapter 6 of the Skidding Resistance Procedure.
- Skid resistance data for a particular section of road (a site) will be scrutinised and compared against its Investigatory Level.
- Sites where skid resistance falls at or below the investigatory level will be identified for further investigation.
- The further investigation will take into account other factors such as whether there is road traffic accident history at the site to establish whether remedial treatment is necessary.
- Where remedial treatment is deemed to be of benefit, sites will be prioritised using a risk assessment approach and inserted into a work programme for action within the resources available.

The above principles will be applied on an ongoing basis so that skid resistance across the highway network is continually monitored and managed appropriately.

The term “skid resistance” used in this document refers to the frictional properties of a road surface, measured using a specified device, under standardised conditions. Skid resistance testing is carried out on wet or damp surfaces, unless stated otherwise, as the skid resistance of a surface will be substantially lower than when the same surface is dry.

Skid resistance measurements are used as an empirical assessment of a road surface’s level of grip and as an indication of the potential need for further investigation based on known acceptable limits. However, it should be noted it does not represent the definitive grip available to a road user making a particular manoeuvre at a particular time and at a particular speed.

Disclaimer: The information contained herein is intended to represent industry best practice. No liability is accepted by XAIS or RSTA for any damages caused to property or personal injury resulting from using the guidance contained within this document.
2. Responsibilities

2.1. Legal Responsibilities

Councils have a statutory duty under Section 41 of the Highways Act to maintain highways that are maintainable at public expense. Although the formal management of highway skid resistance is not a legal requirement it is considered good practice and it supports the aims and objectives set out in the Council’s Highway Asset Management Plan and Road Safety Strategies.

Section 58 of the Highways Act 1980 provides the ability to form a statutory defence to counter legal actions for negligence. The Council must be able to prove in a court of law that it has taken ‘such care as is in all the circumstances reasonably required to secure that part of the highway to which the action relates was not dangerous for traffic.’ When considering a third party legal action against the Council the Court will consider such factors as:

- The character of the highway and the traffic which was reasonably to be expected to use it
- The standard of maintenance appropriate for a highway of that character and used by such traffic
- The state of repair in which a reasonable person would have expected to find the highway
- Whether the Council knew, or could reasonably have been expected to know, that the condition of the part of the highway to which the action relates was likely to cause danger to users of the highway
- Whether the Council could reasonably have been expected to repair that part of the highway before the cause of action arose.

Section 58 of The Highways Act 1980 does not stipulate the standard of maintenance applicable to the highway.

It is accepted by the Courts that different standards of maintenance are applicable to the road network; this is related to vehicle and pedestrian usage as well as speeds of the vehicles using the highway. The Court therefore takes into account that it would be unrealistic for the Council to monitor and maintain adequate levels of skid resistance on the whole network as this would not be deemed “reasonably practicable”.

The development of this skid resistance policy/strategy to ensure a suitably structured procedure and strategy is implemented for the highway under its care and adequate levels of skid resistance are maintained within reasonable expectations as outlined in the Highways Act 1980.

Importantly, this policy/strategy will provide documentary evidence of the Council’s proactive approach to skid resistance management.
2.2. Roles and Responsibilities

This section sets out the various roles and responsibilities for the management of the Skid Resistance Policy/Strategy.

The annual Skid Resistance Survey Programme will be procured through a specialist accredited SCRIM contractor.

Councils’ Highway Asset Management Teams are responsible for the:

- Management, development, implementation and regular review of the Skid Resistance Policy/Strategy
- The procurement and subsequent management of skid resistance surveys with contractors
- Assignment of site categories and investigatory levels on the road network subject to skid resistance surveys
- Processing, analysis and review of skid resistance data received from survey contractor.
- Review of the site categories and investigatory levels for the road network subject to skid resistance surveys. This review will be undertaken every three years
- Maintaining the appropriate records of site visits and associated documents
- Informing other Council departments of any issues affecting the site which may be contributory to skid resistance issues.
- Providing a prioritised list of sites that would benefit from improvement works and making informed decisions about how these are integrated into the annual highways forward works programme.

Councils’ Highway Asset Management Teams will ensure that the most appropriate remedial action is taken at sites identified as requiring action. Some examples of the options available are:

- Monitor
- Erection and removal of warning signs
- Refresh of white lining markings on the carriageway
- Retexturing of the road surface with the appropriate treatments available
- Resurfacing of the carriageway with a material that will ensure that the road achieves the correct skid resistance for that road section