**THURSDAY 14 NOVEMBER 2024**

**Northern Ireland sees biggest increase in accidental deaths, warns new report**

* Accidental death rates in Northern Ireland are up by 56% over the last decade – the second-biggest rise of anywhere in the UK
* The rate of fatalities on Northern Irish roads is 34% higher than the UK
* Accidents cost the UK £12 billion every year - £6 billion in NHS medical care and £5.9 billion in lost working days
* The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) today launches [‘Safer Lives, Stronger Nation’](https://www.rospa.com/campaigns-and-fundraising/current-campaigns/national-accident-prevention-strategy/report), which reveals new data into rising accident numbers and calls on the Government to implement a National Accident Prevention Strategy to save lives, boost the economy and free up capacity in the NHS

Accidental death rates in Northern Ireland have risen by 56% in the last decade and accidents took almost 700 lives in 2022, according to a new report launched today by RoSPA, entitled, ‘Safer Lives, Stronger Nation’. As well as the tragic human loss, preventable accidents cost the UK a massive £12 billion every year due to lost working days and medical care. RoSPA is calling on the Government to implement a National Accident Prevention Strategy to save lives, boost the economy and free up capacity in the NHS.

Northern Ireland is home to the second-highest rate of accidental death in the UK, behind only Scotland, and is currently 14% higher than the UK’s overall rate of accidental death and 23% higher than the rate in England.

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|  | **Number of accidental deaths in 2022** | **% rise in accidental death rates, 2013 to 2022** | **Rate of accidental deaths per 100,000 people** |
| **UK-wide** | 21,336 | Shape42% increase | 32 deaths |
| **England** | 16,765 | Shape40% increase | 29 deaths |
| **Scotland** | 2,677 | Shape57% increase | 49 deaths |
| **Wales** | 1,206 | Shape41% increase | 39 deaths |
| **Northern Ireland** | 688 | Shape56% increase | 36 deaths |

**Higher likelihood of fatality on Northern Irish roads**

People are more likely to have a fatal transport-related accident in Northern Ireland, with the rate of transport deaths 34% higher than the UK’s overall rate. Pedestrians are particularly vulnerable in Northern Ireland, as they have the highest rate of accidental death than anywhere in the UK. Accidental death rates of pedestrians in Northern Ireland are 142% higher than the rest of the UK and 175% higher than in England.

Accidental deaths of car occupants are also 88% higher in Northern Ireland than in the UK as a whole, and similarly there are higher rates of death amongst pedal cyclists (83% higher) and motorcyclists (20% higher) in Northern Ireland.

**Accidental deaths from falls and drowning higher in Northern Ireland**

The rate of non-transport fatal accidents in Northern Ireland is also 13% higher than in the UK as a whole. This is mainly due to the fact that deaths from accidental falls are over a third (37%) higher in Northern Ireland than the rest of the UK – and falls are by far the largest cause of accidental death in Northern Ireland.

The other significantly higher cause of accidental death in Northern Ireland is drowning, with rates almost three quarters (71%) higher than in the UK.

Some causes of death, such as crushing, striking and machinery (known in medicine as being caused by ‘inanimate mechanical forces’) are 66% lower in Northern Ireland than the UK. Similarly, the rate of accidental poisonings is 10% lower in Northern Ireland than in the UK.

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| **Cause of accidental death** | **Rate in Northern Ireland compared to the UK as a whole** | **Rate in Wales compared to the UK as a whole** | **Rate in Scotland compared to the UK as a whole** |
| All types of accidental deaths | 14% higher | 22% higher | 56% higher |
| Transport-related | 34% higher | 18% higher | 46% higher |
| Transport accident - car occupants | 88% higher | 5% higher | 166% higher |
| Transport accident - pedestrians | 142% higher | 35% lower | 96% higher |
| Transport accident - motorcyclists | 20% higher | 78% higher | 50% higher |
| Non-transport related | 13% higher | 22% higher | 57% higher |
| Falls | 37% higher | 24% higher | 45% higher |
| Crushing, striking, machinery (‘exposure to inanimate mechanical forces’) | 66% lower | 147% higher | 6% higher |
| Exposure to other living things e.g. dog bites (‘exposure to animate mechanical forces’) | 7% higher | 227% higher | 25% lower |
| Drowning | 71% higher | 10% lower | 59% higher |

**Falls are the most common cause of accidental death in Northern Ireland**

RoSPA’s data reveals that like the UK as a whole, falls are the most common cause of accidental death in Nothern Ireland (55%), followed by poisonings (21%).

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| **Most common cause of accidental death in 2022 (UK wide)** | **Most common cause of accidental death in 2022 (Northern Ireland)** |
| 1.Falls – 46% | 1. Falls – 55% |
| 2.Poisonings – 26% | 1. Poisonings – 21% |
| 3.Other – 13% | 1. Other – 9% |
| 4.Road traffic / transport – 7% | 1. Road traffic / transport – 8% |
| 5.Threats to breathing e.g. choking and suffocating – 3% | 1. Threats to breathing e.g. choking and suffocating – 3% |
| 6. Drowning – 1% | 1. Drowning – 2% |

**Accidents cost the UK almost £12 billion every year**

As well as personal pain and injury, accidents put a huge strain on the NHS, costing at least £6 billion annually in NHS medical care – not including ambulance callouts, surgery or long-term treatment.

Across the UK accidents led to around 5.2 million bed days, costing the NHS an estimated £5.4 billion last year. In addition, accidents resulted in around 7 million Accident & Emergency (A&E) visits across the UK last year, costing a further £613 million, bringing the total cost of accidents to the NHS to at least £6 billion annually.

Accident-related injuries are also a drain on the economy and prevent people from working. The combined cost to UK businesses is £5.9 billion, due to lost output and indirect management costs.

**Ten times more working days lost due to accidents than strikes**

Across the UK in 2022/23 7.7 million working days were lost by those who were unable to work after an accident as they’d been admitted to hospital, or by their carers who took time off work to be with them. A further 21 million working days were lost by those who had to attend A&E after an accident. In total in 2022/23 accidents led to almost 29 million lost working days across the UK – 10 times more than were lost due to strikes (2.7 million lost working days) in the same year.

**RoSPA is calling for the Government to create a National Accident Prevention Strategy to save lives, boost the economy and free up capacity in the NHS. Read RoSPA’s full report,** [**‘*Safer Lives, Stronger Nation’*.**](https://www.rospa.com/campaigns-and-fundraising/current-campaigns/national-accident-prevention-strategy/report)

**Steve Cole, Director of Policy, Campaigns and Public Affairs at RoSPA, said:** “Northern Ireland is facing an accident crisis. People in Northern Ireland are substantially more likely to suffer a serious accident today than they were 20 years ago. We must take action now to stop further preventable deaths and serious injuries – accidents are avoidable and do not need to happen. Even those who have never been involved in an accident are still suffering, as increasing numbers of accidents are choking the UK economy and engulfing the NHS – taking up bed space, money, time and resources that could be directed to other serious illnesses.

“Our new report revealing the growing numbers and types of fatal and life-changing accidents across the UK unveils a new public health scandal. By implementing a National Accident Prevention Strategy to sit across government departments problems can be tackled at their core, with a joined-up approach to cover all types of accidents – whether they happen at home, on the road, at work or in public. For too long we have accepted the economic and social consequences of accidents, and we’re still paying the price. We are calling for a National Accident Prevention Strategy to make Northern Ireland a safer place to live.”

**Dan Evans, Chief Executive at Speedy Hire, said:** “We take health and safety extremely seriously, and it is a source of immense pride that we have been recognised for our excellence in keeping colleagues and customers safe. For us, colleague safety doesn’t begin and end at the workplace door, which is why at Speedy Hire we take a ‘whole person, whole life’ approach. This has never been more important to do so, as RoSPA’s report reveals people are far more likely to suffer a serious accident at home than they are at work. Both the cost of accidents to peoples’ personal lives and to businesses is far too high, so we must act now to keep people safe and support economic growth.”

**Dr. James Broun, Research Manager at RoSPA and author of ‘Safer Lives, Stronger Nation’, said:** “Our major review of all accident data uncovers the full scale and true cost of accidents for the very first time. This data is unique; it looks at all types of accidents across the UK, as well as individually across all four nations.

“Accidents aren’t currently monitored or recorded to the same extent as other health issues, but the findings are alarming. Accident rates across the UK, as well as within England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland – are rising steeply. We’ve brought together this data to reveal the reality of this crisis and to impress upon the Government that action must be taken to reverse rising accident figures.”

RoSPA are calling for the Government to seize the initiative and create a National Accident Prevention Strategy – a first for the UK. And, because it’s impossible to arrest a crisis like this without a plan, RoSPA propose that the National Accident Prevention Strategy is the specific responsibility of an individual minister without a portfolio. This would enable the minister to treat accident prevention holistically, with the authority to attend the Cabinet and the ability to convene cross-departmental committees.

The National Accident Prevention Strategy must:

* Take a joined-up approach which cuts across departments and provides strategic leadership to guide policy making at national level
* Empower individual departments or agencies to craft and implement more detailed policies
* Propose ambitious and evidence-led but realistic policy interventions to reduce accident rates
* Cover the core sectors directly affecting the UK economy: home, work, product, leisure and transport
* Be forward-facing to address emerging challenges, like the climate crisis, the rise of AI and the UK’s ageing population
* Address inequalities like deprivation, age, ethnicity and region
* Take a four-nations approach to data sharing and collaboration
* Strengthen Government’s data collection and publishing processes relating to accidents

**-Ends-**

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**Notes to Editor(s)**

\*The full report, entitled: ‘Safer Lives, Stronger Nation: Our Call for a National Accident Prevention Strategy’ is available here: [www.rospa.com/campaigns-and-fundraising/current-campaigns/national-accident-prevention-strategy/report](https://www.rospa.com/campaigns-and-fundraising/current-campaigns/national-accident-prevention-strategy/report)

* A range of case studies and accompanying photographs are available by request
* Please contact the press team to arrange interviews with spokespeople
* Media pack can be found here: <https://www.rospa.com/campaigns-and-fundraising/current-campaigns/national-accident-prevention-strategy/media-pack>
* [RoSPA](http://www.rospa.com/) is a leading voice in health and safety that campaigns to reduce avoidable accidents. Our vision is to create a life free from accidental injury, and with the support of our members, this is at the core of everything we do. We lobby Government on issues that matter, pioneer the world’s largest health and safety awards and provide a suite of RoSPA qualifications that help learners and employers keep their colleagues safe from accidents and ill-health.