

Non-motor vehicle related pedestrian injury on and near the road – Implications for the Safe System approach to road safety

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The number and causes of non-motor vehicle injuries to pedestrians, on or near the road, were examined through a structured interview survey. Under a Safe System approach, these injuries are the responsibility of the Road Controlling Authority, which is responsible for making sure surfaces are not too slippery and that they do not contain trip hazards. However, because they do not involve motor vehicle they do not appear in the CAS database of police reported motor vehicle crashes and do not have the visibility or attention of injuries sustained in crashes involving motor vehicles.

The highest proportion of trips and falls (34%) were sustained while stepping over a kerb. Factors which amplified the severity of injuries included the road or path surface, pedestrians' inattention, type of footwear worn, and whether walking or running. Two main issues were identified from the study. These were that: 1) people tripped and fell more often on poorly maintained surfaces as opposed to poorly designed areas; and 2) the severity of the injuries is directly related to the surface.

The authors recommended improving the definition of kerbing in key pedestrian areas and improving the maintenance regime of footpaths and roads used by pedestrians, including crossing points. Surfaces should have acceptable skid resistance and continuity from the outset and this should be preserved through maintenance. The study also recommends making areas used by pedestrians more predictable in design. The authors also perceived a need to provide improved data and analysis tools to allow Authorities to prioritise such countermeasures vis-à-vis other uses of road safety funds, and for improved data for input into such analysis tools.