



Safety alert

29/06/26

Electronic Trailer Brake Failure

1. What happened?

A loaded trailer was being transported between two locations on a gravel road. Prior to departure, pre-use checks were completed, including verification of the trailer lighting system. While descending a hill towards the powerhouse at low speed on a 30 km/h road and approaching a corner, the driver applied the brakes. The trailer failed to decelerate as expected, continued moving forward, and jackknifed. As a result, the towing vehicle left the roadway and came to rest in a swale drain.



2. How did it happen?

Following the incident, the driver exited the vehicle and discovered that the trailer electrical plug had become disconnected from the vehicle socket, rendering the trailer brakes inoperative.

3. What did we learn?

Trailer plugs can become disconnected under certain operating conditions. In this case, the travel route contained several ruts and included both uphill and downhill sections, which may have contributed to the plug disengaging.

4. How can we improve?

- Verify trailer brake operation in a controlled environment before travel, such as on a straight section of road, including trailer plugs correctly connected.
- Adjust travel speed to suit road conditions and load weight, with additional caution when towing heavy loads.
- Ensure the trailer braking system is appropriate for the weight and nature of the load being transported.
- Consider reducing load size or completing multiple trips where practical to minimise the consequences of a control failure, such as loss of trailer braking capability.