

TO SWERVE AND PROTECT

Rory McGoldrick outlines what can be done to minimise the effects of HVM

Traffic management (TM) and hostile vehicle mitigation (HVM) are inextricably linked, but it's vital to remember that the two disciplines are complementary, not the same. While traffic management often involves road closures, it's HVM that protects the road closure from hostile or errant vehicles. If traffic management is in place, law-abiding citizens will respect diversions and take a different route, but it is HVM that keeps people safe from vehicle attacks and provides time to react with run-tell-hide protocols in the event of other attacks.

As the UK prepares for Martyn's Law, it's natural for venues, event organisers and local authorities to look to TM companies for support with HVM, and some have expertise in both. But there is much more to HVM than putting rated equipment behind the road closure as a tick in a box or a visual deterrent. It's essential that equipment is correctly specified and expertly installed to the agreed risk assessment and method statement (RAMS), aligned not only to the risk, but also the manufacturer's guidelines and the 'as tested' configuration.

There are lots of HVM systems available, which not only means that companies can be independent of any specific manufacturer or system, but also that they can select a system or combination of solutions best suited to mitigating risk for a specific location or event.

Spec should always be aligned to risk, providing a proportionate solution that takes into account the potential maximum size, velocity and trajectory of an attacking vehicle, based on the width of the carriageway, road layout and topography of the location. While considering factors such as operational requirements, aesthetics and budget, the chosen solution should neither be under-specified nor over-specified, ensuring that risk is adequately mitigated, without overlooking the seriousness of the hazard or adding unnecessary cost.

Some systems are quicker and easier to install than others and we consider this as part of our spec criteria, ensuring rapid installation and de-rigging are factored into recommendations. All systems should always be installed by trained technicians, however, in an 'as tested' configuration that ensures they will perform according to their rating if the worst should happen. There are a number of common installation errors to look out for,:

HVM PLACED AT AN INCORRECT ANGLE

If an impact-rated HVM system has been rated based on a vehicle hitting it at a 90° angle (head on), it needs to be installed in a straight line so that any attacking vehicle hits the protection head on. If you see HVM units that are rated for a 90° angle of impact arranged in a curve or horseshoe, they have not been installed 'as tested' and may not, therefore, deliver the system's rated performance in the event of a vehicle attack.



HVM IN AN INAPPROPRIATE CONFIGURATION

HVM systems can be certified as either 'impact rated', (which means they have been successfully tested to protect against the impact of a vehicle travelling towards the protected area at a specified maximum speed), or 'delay rated', which means they have been tested to withstand repeated nudging by a vehicle in an attempt to displace the protection. Some systems can be installed in either an 'impact rated' or a 'delay rated' Vehicle Attack Delay Standard (VADS) configuration. It is important that the correct configuration is in place, aligned to the identified risk. While VADS protection is suitable for some environments, a VADS installation that does not also have an impact rating is not compliant for protecting against the risk of a vehicle travelling at speed.

DEBRIS DISTANCES

Included in the rating for impact-rated HVM systems is the distance any debris will travel from the HVM installation site in the event of an impact. This includes debris from damage to the vehicle and the HVM itself, which could potentially injure pedestrians if not factored into planning for the deployment. The installation should always be at a safe distance from the crowd to minimise the potential collateral damage of debris should a vehicle attack.

HVM is a complex field, with expertise required at every touchpoint; from specification, through to RAMS, installation, management and de-rigging. There is a lot of support available online, in particular from the National Protective Security Authority (NPSA), as well as from your local police Counter Terrorism Security Advisor (CTSA). When working with a specialist provider, don't be afraid to ask questions and check that the protection being put in place matches the requirement. It's not how the HVM looks that's important, it's how it performs – and someone's life could depend on that!

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