

Driving for work

Whether you are a company director, domiciliary care worker, maintenance worker or nurse, driving for work is the most dangerous activity most employees ever undertake, making driver safety a vital consideration for businesses. Employees who drive on business are more likely to be killed at work than those employed as deep sea divers or coal miners.

There are hundreds of thousands of injuries on the roads every year and millions of collisions that result in expensive damage to vehicles and property. Around a third of all road traffic incidents may involve somebody who was driving as part of their work at the time and many are avoidable.

Driving for Better Business is a Highways England campaign, supported by the a broad range of other organisations such as the Health and Safety Executive, to raise awareness of the importance of work related road safety in the business community and public sector.

Click link for free resources <https://www.drivingforbetterbusiness.com/driver-management-guide/> including guides and free risk assessment template for driving

DRIVING AS PART OF WORK	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Driver/rider driving as part of work						
• Killed	93	87	90	71	83	84
• Seriously injured	1,384	1,301	1,286	1,301	1,171	1,305
• Slightly injured	15,465	14,882	13,991	14,372	12,877	12,100
• All casualties	16,942	16,270	15,367	15,744	14,131	13,489
Passenger of driver/rider driving as part of work						
• Killed	24	30	25	22	21	18
• Seriously injured	525	538	517	486	471	481
• Slightly injured	9,068	8,267	7,332	7,790	7,106	6,615
• All casualties	9,617	8,835	7,874	8,298	7,598	7,114
Other casualty in accident involving a driver/rider driving for work						
• Killed	442	422	400	454	437	427
• Seriously injured	3,288	3,392	3,249	3,381	3,180	3,483
• Slightly injured	22,519	21,670	20,712	22,107	20,513	19,535
• All casualties	26,249	25,484	24,361	25,942	24,130	23,445
All casualties in accidents involving a driver/rider driving for work						
• Killed	559	539	515	547	541	529
• Seriously injured	5,197	5,231	5,052	5,168	4,822	5,269
• Slightly injured	47,052	44,819	42,035	44,269	40,496	38,250
• All casualties	52,808	50,589	47,602	49,984	45,859	44,048

Decreasing risk: Avoiding accidents

Failing to look properly

One of the most common causes of accidents in the UK is arguably the easiest to prevent. Simply by taking the extra split-second to have a proper look before pulling out or changing lanes, would prevent many collisions.

Tiredness or even laziness are often to blame, but familiarity of route is another common cause. This is particularly applicable to drivers who may frequently make the same journey for work, making it easy to suffer a lapse in concentration on a particular junction or turning.

The Institute of Advanced Motorists says: "Simple human errors continue to cause the majority of accidents". Drivers cannot blame something or someone else for a collision happening, it is down to every one of us to make a difference.

"We feel that many people eventually get complacent behind the wheel and inattention creeps in. Combine this with fatigue and distractions, inside and outside the vehicle and the message is clear that drivers must apply their full attention to driving – you simply cannot do two things at once if one of them is driving."

Failing to judge the path or speed of another vehicle

This causes about 20% of all UK road accidents. Misjudging a gap when merging onto a motorway, pulling onto a busy roundabout, or wrongly assuming another vehicle will make a manoeuvre can be disastrous. An underrated key skill when driving is anticipation, judging the size and speed of an oncoming vehicle, especially when it's dark, is important to staying safe on the road. The Highway Code's advice is to: "Wait until there is a safe gap between you and any oncoming vehicle".

Being careless, reckless or in a hurry

Despite the changes in the law, many people continue to use their mobile phone when driving. There were 11,961 prosecutions of people 'using or causing others to use a handheld mobile phone when driving' in 2016. The penalty for such an offence doubled in March 2017, to six points and a £200 fine.

Being distracted at the wheel can cause a driver to miss, or spot late, any road furniture or potholes which could lead to a dangerous evasive manoeuvre or damage to the vehicle. Data from the AA reveals that the number of pothole insurance claims for the first four months of 2018 already equals those placed for the entirety of 2017, with an average repair bill of £1,000.

"The cost of replacement parts for HGVs, such as tyres, can be high," said Stuart Thomas, Director of Fleet and SME Services. "Typically, fleet drivers clock up more miles each year than the average driver, due to the distances they cover across the UK. Equally, they are more likely to encounter potholes on unfamiliar routes."

Surprisingly, according to road safety charity, Brake, four in 10 organisations don't have a specific speed policy for their drivers. The charity goes on to say that having a policy, either in employee contracts or handbooks, is an 'essential step' in improving road safety.

Driving for Better Safety

Some of the guidance of what to incorporate in such a policy includes: 'never exceeding the legal speed limit under any circumstances', 'slowing right down in bad weather' as well as 'in town centres and around schools' and to 'maintain a two-second gap to the vehicle in front'.

When putting together such a policy, it's important that it clearly implies that all staff, including contractors, are responsible. Telematics have aided fleet driver behaviour in recent years. Through monitoring things such as speeding, excess engine idling, harsh braking and acceleration, all of which can impact on vehicle running costs, fleets can save money and,

more importantly, help to prevent reckless driving. The fact that drivers know they are being monitored can result in better driving style. Improved driver behaviour can pay dividends in terms of reduced wear and tear on components. For instance, monitoring driver behaviour has been shown to improve fuel economy by typically 10-15%.

4. Losing control

Often, losing control when driving too fast can be put down to speeding. But that is not always the case. You can easily lose control of a vehicle, even when driving within the speed limit, if carrying out manoeuvres at an unsafe speed. Adverse weather conditions are also a common cause of losing control of a vehicle. Maintaining the conditions of your fleet, particularly tyres, can go a long way to avoiding losing control in bad weather.

According to TyreSafe, 'dangerous tyres are responsible for more than 40% of vehicle defect related deaths.' TyreSafe recommends that 'tyres should be inspected at least once a month and before any long journey. Checks should include checking the air pressure, overall condition and tread depth. Also, checking the spare, or the compressor and sealant if no spare was fitted.'

Daily pre-trip checks are a legal requirement with HGVs, but not for cars or vans. Introducing this discipline for all vehicles in the fleet can reduce the risk of breakdowns and ensure vehicles are properly maintained.

Drink driving

Drink driving remains one of the most widely publicised causes of road accidents and they are still far too common, considering the regular and expensive stream of advertising campaigns warning us against it.

It's important to remember that whilst there is a legal limit for alcohol intake when driving, alcohol affects the bodies of different people in different ways. Many drivers simply do not understand how long alcohol can stay in the body, and that some common myths for sobering up can actually delay the process, making it more likely they could still be over the limit the following morning – 20% of positive breath tests are carried out in the mornings.

A fine of up to £5,000 and six months in prison can be levelled at anyone caught driving or attempting to drive while unfit. In addition, there is a minimum 12-month driving ban.

At a Corporate level have you risk assessed your driving activities and drivers? How often do you check licences? If you supply work vehicles, have staff had a suitable induction for the vehicle? Have staff been given a daily checklist to follow before starting to drive the works vehicle? If they use their own, and take colleagues as passengers, such as in Domiciliary care situations, have they got appropriate insurance cover? Do you ever check medication of your driving staff?

If you have any queries. Please get in touch.

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SOURCES
SHP on Line
HSE
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