



Bringing you important news for business drivers - April 2008

Show time

DriveTech will be exhibiting at the Fleet Business Show, which takes place on April 29 and 30th at the Business Design Centre, 52 Upper Street, Islington, London N1 0QH. This is the first proper indoor fleet trade show for about five years or more.



The event has been well supported by all the major names in the industry, with Ford being the latest to join the fray, and there are rumoured to be several important announcements about new products and services.

DriveTech is occupying stand M67, which is adjacent to the stairs on the right hand side of the hall as you look at it from the main entrance, opposite the Jaguar stand. Please drop by to see us, as we hope to have a revised version of the DriveTech Driving Monitor product to demonstrate to visitors.

For more information about the show, including details on the seminars and how to acquire an entry ticket, please see www.fleetbusinessshow.co.uk

Check that date

DriveTech recently alerted the trade media to the possible confusion that might take place over the updating of photographs on photocard licences.



Most drivers believe that the expiry date shown on the **back** of their licences is all they have to worry about. In fact the licence has to be renewed, incorporating a new photograph, before the date shown on the **front** of the licence. **It's the '4b' date you are looking for.**

Drivers will receive a reminder from the DVLA but it is important they react to this, as failing to do so will mean that they are in fact in possession of an illegal licence.

Foreign cowboys

Some of you may have seen the very sobering ITV documentary on March 31 about the very real threat to road safety posed by foreign trucks on UK roads. A horrifyingly high percentage are either mechanically substandard or are being driven by irresponsible people who are ignoring the driver's hours regulations. Several drivers interviewed admitted to driving non stop for in excess of 12 hours. One unfortunate guy actually thanked the police for stopping him – he had already driven for 23 hours without sleep

due to pressure from his employer!

There are moves afoot for EU countries to share data to enable cross border prosecutions to be pursued for traffic infringements but at the moment this is restricted to speeding, drink driving, not wearing a seat belt and failing to stop at a red light.



Sideswipe incidents are still a frequent occurrence on motorways, despite the fact that from March 31st Highways Agency Traffic Officers in the East Midlands will be distributing, free of charge, magnifying window lenses to drivers of left-hand drive lorries.

The point here is to remember to ALWAYS give foreign registered trucks a wide berth if you can. Whenever possible avoid getting into a 'three abreast' situation, particularly if a truck is one of the occupants of the lanes, by hanging back or timing your overtake accordingly. As part of your scanning routine, seek out trucks with foreign looking sign writing and graphics, plan your overtaking manoeuvre well in advance and keep asking yourself 'what if'

Thatcham achievement



DriveTech was proud to see one of its customers, the Motor Insurance Repair Research Centre Thatcham, receive an accolade at the industry's glitziest event, the Fleet News Awards, last month.

The world-renowned centre of excellence received its award for 'Best Safety Initiative'.

Save fuel

Here are useful tips for improving your fuel economy:

- Plan your journey. With a bit of preparation you can avoid those fuel-sapping detours and hold ups.
- Start your car and immediately drive off. It's a myth that modern cars need warming up to run efficiently.
- Equally if you are stuck in traffic, switch the engine off. Hot re-starts are seldom a problem with modern cars
- Turn off electrical equipment such as rear screen demisters or air conditioning when not needed.
- Do not use front or rear fog lights unless it's foggy!
- Always maintain tyre pressures in accordance with manufacturers' recommendations.
- Comply with speed limits – you'll be amazed how much fuel you save.
- If you have a roof rack, only fit it when you need it for the purpose for it was intended.
- On the motorway really think about how you are applying pressure to the accelerator pedal. You'll be surprised how much you can back off the pressure without losing much momentum.
- In urban areas, plan well ahead to maintain as steady a pace as you can. If you're constantly braking and accelerating you're wasting fuel.
- Don't apply the brakes just because the guy in front does, particularly on motorways. Leave plenty of space, look well beyond the vehicle in front and anticipate the actions of others. So many braking actions are unnecessary.....and can also cause collisions

- Being in the highest gear is not always the most fuel efficient way of driving, particularly if you then have to suddenly accelerate. Being in a lower gear on a light throttle is often more efficient than being in a higher gear on a wide throttle opening.

More mobile mayhem

The argument for banning employees from using hands-free phones while driving is gathering momentum after new research proved that motorists on mobile phones contribute to traffic congestion because they drive more slowly. The research found that motorists talking on mobile phones while driving on dual carriageways and motorways were not only slower but less likely to overtake.



“The average person’s commute is longer because of that person who is on the phone in front of them,” said University of Utah psychology professor Dave Strayer. “If you talk on the phone while driving, it’s going to take you longer to get from A to B, and slows down everybody else on the road,” explained researcher Joel Cooper, a doctoral student

in psychology.

The findings support previous research that using a hands-free phone is as dangerous while driving as using a hand-held phone, because it is the conversation itself that is the major distraction. Earlier studies also found that mobile phone users followed at greater distances, were slower to brake and to regain speed after braking.

Go with the flow

An innovative scheme to reduce congestion and improve traffic flows at some of the busiest junctions on the motorway network is being introduced on the M4, M25 and A1(M).



Works to install lights on motorway entry slip roads to better regulate traffic joining the motorway on the M4, M25 and A1(M) are expected to be completed during April 2008. Before the system goes live, the lights need to be calibrated to ensure the regulation of traffic flows are at an optimum level for traffic joining the respective motorways. This takes approximately 6 weeks to

be completed.

Congestion often occurs near junctions where vehicles attempt to join from the slip road when there is already heavy traffic on the motorway. By releasing just a few vehicles at a time, the lights prevent the merging and motorway traffic from bunching together and forming a bottleneck that delays everyone.

Driving for Better Business

DriveTech is supporting the ‘Driving for Better Business’ programme that is being administered by RoadSafe on behalf of the Department for Transport. The idea is to



**Driving for
Better Business**

promote the activities of a series of champions from a number of different commercial sectors, all of whom have adopted successful driver risk management

programmes, and then persuade all employing organizations where vehicles are involved that this is not only best practice but makes sound economic sense.

For more information, and lots of helpful advice, please www.drivingforbetterbusiness.com

Parking penalties

This is not strictly safety-related but is an important fleet running cost issue.



Motorists are facing parking fines of up to £120 under new laws, it has been reported. It is feared that from next month new rules will set different levels of fines for different parking offences, meaning a huge increase in parking fines.

In London, motorists could face fines of up to £120, while outside the capital the maximum penalty will be £70. More serious offences will warrant higher fines, such as parking on double yellow lines on important roads.

If you overstay a parking meter you'll be hit by one of the lower fines. The Government has claimed that this is a fairer system but motoring groups have criticised the new rules.

Last year 3.57million motorists were issue with parking tickets, producing a revenue of £214 million for local authorities!

Lane change

The Highways Agency is embarking on a £136,000 scheme to cut accidents at a busy motorway junction in Greater Manchester.



Eight new signs are being installed on link roads where the M60 meets the M61 to give clearer directions to motorists and help them to make sure they are in the correct lane.

There have been more than 50 accident casualties at the M60 junction 15/ M61 interchange at Kearsley in the past five years and the Highways Agency wants to make the location safer for motorists.

Tired drivers in focus

A lorry driver found to suffer from sleep apnoea who fell asleep at the wheel and crashed into a car has been jailed for ten months. Hayden Bailey was returning from delivering bread in Chippenham when the incident happened on April 13 last year.

His 18-tonne lorry hit a near-side crash barrier, veered across two lanes and through the central reservation, killing the two occupants of a Nissan Primera on the opposite carriageway.



Defending, Ian Dixie said medical examinations since the incident revealed Bailey suffered from severe obstructive sleep apnoea, which he was not aware of at the time.

Just last month, in a separate case, 61 year old Ian King was jailed for four years after his 30-tonne lorry ploughed into a car carrying a family of four, all of whom were killed. Mr King was also later found to suffer from sleep apnoea - a respiratory condition which disrupts sleep and can cause drowsiness.

In order to protect themselves from possible prosecution, particularly with the introduction of the revised corporate manslaughter law on April 6th, organisations responsible for business drivers would do well to ensure that they self declare that they are not suffering from such conditions as part of their driving policy. This should be seen as a reasonable step to take to overcome the likelihood of somebody failing to declare a driving safety-compromising health condition.

Driver fatigue is the current topic of the current 'Think!' safety campaign. At the launch recently, Road Safety Minister Jim Fitzpatrick said: "People who drive for work are particularly at risk but there are simple steps we can all take to make our journeys safer. Plan regular stops into a long trip and if you find yourself yawning pull over and take a break - this could make the difference between life and death."

Last but not least

The new Corporate Manslaughter Act comes into force on April 6th. This topic has had more than its fair share of exposure in the trade press but we couldn't bring ourselves to ignore it. Suffice to say that any DriveTech customer that is making use of our services effectively has nothing whatsoever to fear.

As always, if you take sensible steps to gather information about your fleet, implement policies and monitor outcomes, you will create an audit trail which will provide everything you will need to prove compliance.

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