



Working together to eliminate road death and serious injuries

Bringing you important news for business drivers: February 09

Cold comfort

According to new research there is a direct relationship between driver illness and collision rates.

The study found that more than 125,000 crashes were caused last year by motorists who were suffering from colds and flu. This equated to one in 10 road collisions in 2008 being attributed to driver illness, which in total cost £350 million.



It found that driving with a virus such as cold or flu impairs driver awareness by as much as 11% – the equivalent of drinking a double whisky before getting behind the wheel.

The message for business drivers should be – don't fight it; think of the possible consequences and make other arrangements until you are fit and well again.

Keeping insurance affordable

Fleet managers should brace themselves for an increase in insurance premiums in the coming weeks.

According to a recent survey by broker group Aon, 92% of underwriters expect motor insurance premiums for companies that run fleets to increase in the first quarter of 2009. Aon's research suggests insurers are looking to make up for three to four years of offering ultra competitive rates.



And now, with poor profits, the rising cost of claims and the tough

economic climate, it says rate increases in 2009 are a distinct possibility. “We are hearing very strong messages from insurers about rates rising but these have not yet manifested themselves into actual increases,” said Steve Redgwell, broking director for Aon. “Underwriters are still hungry for new business but it is possible for companies to achieve highly competitive rates, as long as businesses can evidence that they are committed to, and have a culture of, good risk management.”

So there’s never been a better time to implement a driver risk management programme, which will not only keep your insurer on side but also reduce your fuel bill, reduce wear and tear costs and keep you duty of care compliant too.

Dealing with snow and ice



We ran this piece of advice last year but make no apologies for repeating it, given the weather conditions we’ve been experiencing recently:

Before you set off

- ⇒ Check that the screen washer reservoir is full and contains proper winter additive.
- ⇒ Check that all the lights are working correctly.
- ⇒ Check that the front, rear and side windows are clear, **inside and out**. Never attempt to move frozen windscreen wipers before lifting them manually off the screen first.
- ⇒ Clear accumulated snow off the roof and bonnet – it can obscure your screens as it starts to move and also land on following vehicles.
- ⇒ Ensure you have warm clothes, waterproof boots, a blanket, some drink and a couple of sugary snacks in the vehicle. A high visibility jacket and warning triangle are also useful.
- ⇒ Know your route and ensure your mobile phone, if you have one, is working.
- ⇒ Journey plan by listening to traffic and weather reports.

Once on the move

- ⇒ ...keep listening to the traffic and weather reports, via the radio or mobile phone (the latter only if parked safely).
- ⇒ Remember that braking distances can be 10 times the normal distance in winter

conditions – maintain lots of space around you.

- ⇒ Avoid harsh steering or braking when in low grip conditions. Be as smooth as possible in everything you do. This will prevent weight transfer, which is usually the precursor for a skid.
- ⇒ Keep well back from the vehicle in front, especially if fellow motorists have, unlike you, not cleared snow from the roof and boot of their vehicles before setting off, which could hit your car without warning.
- ⇒ Prepare for black ice, caused when rain falls on an already frozen surface, by keeping your speed down and looking for changes in surface colour and reflection.
- ⇒ If you feel a skid starting, look towards where you want to go, release the brakes or accelerator and steer 'into' the skid.
- ⇒ If snow has accumulated at the road edge, keep to the snow free carriageway whenever possible. If you inadvertently clip the accumulated snow you could 'dig in' and spin the vehicle.
- ⇒ Look for about escape routes all the time – you may have to avoid other vehicles that are out of control even if you're not.
- ⇒ Don't panic if you come across fresh snow. It can often provide more grip than compacted snow, which is effectively ice.....and which will provide no grip whatsoever.
- ⇒ Once a thaw starts, expect fog – if you use fog lights remember to switch them off when it clears or at the end of the journey.
- ⇒ In difficult driving conditions concentration is everything. If you start to feel tired, don't fight it – stop where it's safe, take a high energy drink, walk around for five minutes and only continue if you feel refreshed.
- ⇒ When you arrive at your destination, and sub zero temperatures are expected whilst the vehicle is parked it's a good idea not to apply the handbrake, in case it becomes seized on. Leave the vehicle in gear instead.

Text killer

A motorist who sent and received more than 20 text messages before she crashed into another car killing its driver has been jailed for 21 months and given a three-year driving ban. Philippa Curtis, 21, from Suffolk, was texting before she hit the back of a stationary car belonging to Victoria McBryde, who was dealing with a burst tyre, at 70mph on the A40 near Wheatley in Oxfordshire.



Curtis, who only suffered a minor arm injury, spun into oncoming traffic, hit two more vehicles, a white van and an Asda lorry, the court heard. She admitted sending text messages while driving, but denied using her mobile phone at the time of the collision. "I can't really describe in words how bad I actually feel," Curtis told the court. "I just feel awful that I was involved and I can't really imagine how the family must feel."

If this driver had been at work at the time and it had it been proven that there was a direct connection between her irresponsible behaviour and any work activity, the consequences for her employer could have been severe.

We strongly advise against using a mobile phone, for making or receiving calls or texts, while driving, even with a legal hands free kit. Also using a hand held mobile, even parked up in a safe place, with the engine running is illegal so our advice would be 'Park up and switch off' before making that call.

No insurance



Even more reason to stay alert and maintain lots of space around you. Latest estimates suggest that around 6.5% (around 2 million) of British motorists drive without insurance.

Surprising, considering the penalty for driving without insurance is a maximum fine of £5,000 and between 6 and 8 penalty points. Around 300,000 offenders are convicted for uninsured driving every year.

MOT updates

Drivers who fit registration plates that have an illegal background to prevent identification by speed cameras will now fail their MOT, as well as face prosecution if new modifications to the test come into force.



The government has proposed two changes – one to detect illegal registration-plates and the other to help reduce the number of incidents caused by 'light trailers' becoming detached from towing vehicles.

The MOT will include a new check to help ensure that, where a vehicle has a tow bar, it is not in an obviously unroadworthy state, or in such condition that it is likely to become detached from the vehicle under any circumstances.

It is particularly important that managers of fleets with a large proportion of 'cash for car' vehicles are aware of these changes and have some procedure for monitoring them.

Expensive sandwich

A woman in Liverpool was spotted by a police officer eating her lunchtime sandwich whilst driving and ended up with three points on her licence and a £60 fine.



She said, "The policeman tried to suggest that it was worse than using a mobile phone while driving but I don't accept that for a moment. The whole procedure lasted less than a second. I consider myself a good driver and certainly never take unnecessary risks."

Unsurprisingly the police take the opposite view: "There is no correlation between pushing a button on a radio, or changing gear and eating whilst driving. Each case is treated individually on its merits, but by eating at the wheel a driver is likely to be not in proper control of their vehicle."

It seems that many business drivers still are not aware of the implications of the 2006 Road Safety Act which brought about several changes in the parameters for dangerous driving and driving without due care and attention. It's simple really. If you're driving, that's all you should be doing.

...and news from DriveTech itself:

Thank you to everyone who responded to our pre-Christmas customer satisfaction survey. Your responses resulted in DriveTech being able to send a cheque for just under £200 to the Taplow Traffic Charity Trust, which provides help, support and hope for children who have lost close relatives in traffic collisions (www.ttcharitytrust.org.uk).

Those of you who completed the survey will be hearing back from us in due course as to how we intend implementing changes as a result of the constructive comments that we received from you all.

Smile!



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