



Working together to eliminate road death and serious injuries

Bringing you important news for business drivers

June 2009

Load sense

More than three quarters of vehicles stopped in VOSA checks in England and Wales recently had not been loaded properly.

“The fatal and serious injuries suffered during loading and unloading are needless tragedies and lives are often shattered as a result”, says Marcia Davies, Head of Injury Reduction at the HSE. “Vehicles which are loaded safely for the road can usually be safely unloaded at the workplace and visa versa.”

During the last three years 14 people have been killed and more than 2,000 people have been injured by cargo falling from vehicles whilst they were being loaded or unloaded.



But it's not just loads falling off vehicles that are the problem. Many vans have wrongly placed or badly secured loads which, in an emergency situation can produce enough weight transfer or dynamic imbalance to create instability and thus make avoidance actions highly dangerous.

Any load should be placed as low down and as close to the vehicle's centre of gravity as possible, which usually means up against the bulkhead separating the cab from the load area. Proper broad webbing tie-down straps should be used, preferably with a ratchet type tightening system, attached to manufacturer-fitted floor anchorage points. Any racking, shelving or bulkhead items should be supplied by a reputable specialist, such as Sortimo or Bott.

Watch where you park

An amendment to the 2004 Traffic Management Act came into force on June 1, allowing local authorities to issue Fixed Penalty Notices for inconsiderate or inappropriate parking, *even in the absence of signs specifying the restrictions.*



The idea is to stop motorists double parking and stopping alongside dropped kerbs designed to allow easy access for home-owners or wheelchair users negotiating urban streets.

So drivers should be aware – in future the absence of signs or road markings is no longer an excuse for bad parking.

Big fine

Following a successful prosecution under the 1974 Health and Safety at Work Act, Biffa Waste Services has been ordered to pay £240,000 in fines and court costs following the death of one of its employees as a result of being hit by a vehicle on one of its sites.

Whilst some may argue that the focus of the investigation was not on driving behaviour per se, it does nonetheless demonstrate the HSE's willingness to prosecute for failings in health and safety management that lead to fatalities in a vehicle-related context.

In fact there seem to be signs that the HSE might even start becoming more interested in on-road incidents too. At a recent RoSPA conference, the HSE's Marcia Davies, said: "The Association of Chief Police Officers has produced guidance on when to seek HSE involvement when road traffic legislation cannot address management failures. In road crashes the police will always lead the investigation; we will work in partnership with them."



DriveTech would never wish to be categorised amongst those who brow beat their customers into action by using scare-mongering tactics but it does demonstrate that the legal landscape is slowly but surely changing. Any corporate entity that doesn't address this sort of risk exposure is without doubt walking a very fine line.

Hot topic

Here are some tips in preparation for the scorching summer that we've been promised:

- Modern cars rarely have problems with overheating, so if you see a puddle of water under the car it's more likely to be the aircon condenser overflow. Don't EVER release the radiator filler

cap if the engine has been running. If you have to, let it cool first, use a cloth to protect your hand and release it very slowly.

- Do make sure tyre inflation pressures are as they should be. Warm weather puts even more strain on tyres and they become more puncture prone if under-inflated but always check the pressures cold. Garage forecourt gauges are notoriously inaccurate so it's a good idea to buy your own gauge. The cheap, pencil-style gauges are actually quite accurate.
- If it's really hot, beware of the really black, often newly laid, tarmac surface on some roads, which is prone to partially melting. Surprisingly perhaps you will find very little grip available on a tarmac surface in this state and it's akin to driving on ice. Keep up an active visual scanning routine, look for changes in surface colour or reflections, and curb the speed.
- Summer evenings are great for leisure pursuits so, particularly in rural areas, expect to come across joggers, walkers, horse riders and dogs around that blind bend.
- Always carry some form of fluid in the car for yourself, in case you're trapped in traffic for a long time. Even on a traffic-free journey, make sure you re-hydrate at least every two hours, to fight off fatigue and aid concentration.
- Make sure the washer bottle has some form of proper additive to help remove fly squash and tree sap.
- Use the aircon sparingly – it's hard on fuel consumption.
- Temperatures in vehicles left parked in full sun for over an hour or two can exceed 40 degrees, so don't leave anything in the cabin which can melt. Allow the temperature to drop to a comfortable level before driving off.
- Make sure you have sunglasses handy, particularly for the mornings and evenings. Keep the inside of the front and rear screens clean by using proper glass wipes.
- If you do have the misfortune to break down, try and park the vehicle somewhere safe and warn oncoming traffic if necessary. On motorways always leave the vehicle and retreat to a safe point well away from the hard shoulder (where the average life expectancy is 30 minutes).
- You will inevitably come across caravans, particularly on Friday and Sunday evenings, so make sure they can see you, and you can see the road ahead, by staying well back and as close to the crown of the road as is safe to do on right hand bends and well to the left on left hand bends, rather than tucking back in their blind spot. Give them plenty of time and space.....and don't get overheated yourself.

Foreign truckers

For the savvy business driver the sight of a foreign registered truck sets the alarm bells ringing and quite rightly so.

According to one accident management specialist, collisions involving foreign trucks increased 10% in past year, with over 50% occurring on motorways. Unsurprisingly perhaps the M25 came out as number one collision hotspot.



It seems the 200,000 Fresnel mirrors that the DfT issued to foreign trucks last year have not produced a long term fix. Sideswipe incidents did drop for a few months but they are now back to pre-Fresnel levels.

According to the Association of British Insurers foreign trucks are three times more likely to be involved in collisions than their UK counterparts. Last year there were 30 fatalities in incidents involving foreign trucks.

I know we keep saying it but business drivers would do well to give these guys a wide berth and expect the unexpected. If they are in lane one, and lane three is clear, move out into it until the threat is well behind you.

Useful advice



The BVRLA has launched its revised 'Guide to Driving at Work', which offers advice on putting together a corporate driving at work policy, which will demonstrate you have taken all reasonable steps to protect your employees and other road users. The guide can be downloaded at www.bvrla.co.uk

Five stars



Five new models have achieved the coveted EuroNCAP five star rating for crashworthiness, occupant and pedestrian protection: Audi Q5, Honda Jazz, Hyundai i20, Kia Soul and Peugeot 3008.

...and news from DriveTech itself:

More police schemes

DriveTech has been appointed to delivery several more driver education schemes for the police. We are now operating Speed Awareness Scheme for Cambridgeshire Constabulary and a Driver Improvement Scheme for Surrey Police, as well as some 25 others across the country.

Earlier in the year Northumbria Constabulary extended its Speed Awareness Scheme programme with DriveTech and asked the company to provide both a Driver and Rider Improvement scheme as well.

Smile!



Familiarity breeds contempt?

Issued by the DriveTech Communications Department.

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