

Bringing you important news for business drivers - August 2011

INFORMATION FOR DRIVERS

TIRED OUT



According to research conducted with over 1000 drivers by the road safety charity Brake and Cambridge Weight Plan, one in eight drivers appear to have nodded off while driving in the past year. The effect of fatigue on driver safety has been well documented over the years and, although we've mentioned it before in this e-newsletter, here's a reminder of the

way to combat it:

- Obviously get a good night's sleep if you are driving the following day. If you don't sleep well you could be suffering from sleep apnoea, one of the effects of which is having microsleeps while driving without knowing it. If you're unsure, see your GP as soon as possible.
- Plan your journey to accommodate a 15 minute break every two hours and stick to that.
- Maintain good hydration and sufficient calorie intake to keep energy levels up.
- Avoid travelling between midnight and 6 am, when our in-built Circadian Rhythms prevent us from being at peak alertness and thus compromise good decision making.
- If you can share the driving, do so.
- If you become so tired that it would be unsafe to continue, stop in a safe place, drink two cups of strong coffee and walk around for 10 minutes. Remember... it might take another 10 minutes for the coffee to take effect.
- If a break doesn't have the required effect you have no option but to sleep. Nothing else will work. Opening the window or playing loud music will have no effect. Even a half hour sleep will make a great difference, so choose a safe, quiet spot and set an alarm so that you don't compromise your schedule too much.
- Although your schedule may make it impractical to stop again, be very aware of the detrimental effects of the other Circadian Rhythm dip around 2pm to 4pm. Don't let your concentration lapse for even a second during this period.

CUT THE CLUTTER

In a recent survey, 33% of van drivers and 34% of truck drivers admitted to having nearly crashed several times in the past year simply because their view had been impaired by newspapers, coffee cups, fast food packaging and other detritus near the windscreen on the dashboard.

In fact, the problem can be potentially even more serious than just obscuring vision of the road ahead. Heavier hard items, like drinks cans, can easily roll off the dashboard during cornering or braking and could end up under the brake pedal, with disastrous results.

So don't just chuck it at the foot well or try to wedge items between the dashboard and windscreen. Stow them properly until you can dispose of them in a waste bin.

250 CHARACTER TIP OF THE MONTH #1

Don't be tempted to eat or drink whilst driving. Serious offence now if caught. If it causes death by dangerous driving it's 5 years jail, unlimited fine and mandatory retest. It also probably makes you unemployable and uninsurable too.

A HOLE LOT MORE TROUBLE



The cash-strapped Highways Agency has altered the parameters for pothole repair and many potentially damaging holes just won't get fixed in a hurry any more. Potholes can be very dangerous because even minor ones can cause tyre and suspension damage that may not become apparent for weeks or months afterwards. In all likelihood you'll have

forgotten all about the incident that causes a tyre to deflate seemingly without reason.

The only way to combat this is to constantly have your eyes out on stalks! If a pothole does appear in your eye line, try and avoid it... providing in doing so you're not compromising the safety of other road users.

If you have to hit a pothole, because to do otherwise would cause a collision, get your vehicle checked out by the dealer or tyre specialist as soon as possible afterwards. Don't trust a cursory external visual inspection of your own – it's all too easy to miss something.

250 CHARACTER TIP OF THE MONTH #2

Smoking while driving not a good idea. Illegal in company owned vehicle anyway. Distraction possible during lighting up. Lighter itself a fire hazard. Window interior surfaces get dirty quickly. Smoke also causes eye irritation and obscures vision.

DARK TIMES AHEAD



The Highways Agency is pulling the plug on yet more sections of the motorway network. As part of cost and emissions cutting measures, the lights will be turned off on the MI between junctions 10 and 13 between midnight and 5 am. This means that over half of the UK's motorways are now unlit at night.

It's always worth cutting you speed and allowing yourself time to adjust between the areas of lit and unlit motorways. Older drivers in particular may find that it takes some time longer to adjust, especially going from light to dark, so give yourself plenty of space and time during that settling in phase.

GENERAL DRIVER RISK MANAGEMENT-RELATED NEWS

DRIVER JAILED FOR LOAD DEATHS

Truck driver Graham Morgan from Hereford has been imprisoned for 12 months for allowing his load of roof trusses to fall off his trailer onto the roof of a car, killing both occupants in the process.

The driver's employer Gammond Transport were not found to be negligent and so escaped any corporate responsibility but this does highlight the need for proper training in both securing loads and being fully aware of the presence of other vehicles whilst manoeuvring.

HEFTY COACH FINES



A Middlesex-based coach firm has been fined £137,500 plus £35,000 costs after being party to a flagrant abuse of drivers' hours regulations. 27 of the company's drivers pleaded guilty to the offences and in turn received fines totalling £7,228 with an additional £2,700 costs to pay on

top.

AA DriveTech's Driver CPC workshops on Drivers' Hours have been a popular choice over the last few months and facilitators make a point of covering the penalties for non compliance.

TYRE SAFETY MONTH

October is national Tyre Safety month. The charity TyreSafe has a range of free promotional materials to help you spread the word about the importance of tyre safety to your employees.

For more information see:

<http://www.tyresafe.org/tyre-safety-month/campaign-material/>

NO REST



One of the provisions of the 2006 Road Safety Act – to have more designated rest areas on motorways and trunk roads – has been axed as part the latest budget cuts.

Robert Gifford of the Parliamentary Advisory Council for Transport Safety commented: "Fatigue is a very significant factor in crashes, particularly at night on the motorway network. If rest areas have proven to be too expensive the government needs to renew its advertising campaign to get the message through to drivers about the need to take a break before you fall asleep at the wheel."

Now more than ever it's important to allow drivers to plan realistic driving schedules that can accommodate regular stops. Apart from being the safer option, employees almost always arrive at the meeting or customer appointment in a better, more productive frame of mind so it's a win/win situation for all concerned.

...AND NEWS FROM AA DRIVETECH ITSELF:

AA DRIVETECH ACQUIRES INTELLIGENT DATA SYSTEMS

As hopefully all our readers now know as a result of the recent mailing, AA DriveTech has acquired the driver licence validation market leader Intelligent Data Systems. By way of re-assurance there will be no significant change for the foreseeable future in the way in which existing customers driver licence verification procedures are carried out.

NEW ONLINE MANAGEMENT TOOL

We can now offer a fully integrated online risk management solution which includes a licence validation service, risk exposure assessment tool and ten e-learning modules. Fleet managers can view driver status and outcomes with a single logon via our FleetRiskManager portal.

For more information please visit www.fleetriskmanager.com or call Jennifer Edwards-Reid on 01256 495732.

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