

Bringing you important news for business drivers - February 2011

EMAIL SCAM

A fake DVLA email is currently doing the rounds. It asks you to verify your driver's license [sic] details by following a hyperlink beneath the first paragraph. Apart from the spelling mistake above, the wording is clumsy, as so many of these scams are, so most people would be suspicious. Nonetheless it's worth notifying your drivers.

CLOCKING ON



As this newsletter is now bi-monthly, and won't be appearing again until early April, we thought it would be useful if we mentioned that the clocks go forward on March 27, and so here are a few helpful hints for drivers around that time:

- Expect different road usage patterns in the lighter evenings – watch out for, particularly on rural single track roads, joggers, cyclists, horse-riders and farm vehicles working later than during the winter.
- Expect “the unexpected” around every blind bend. Be particularly watchful for larger animals, like deer, crossing the road in front of you without warning.
- Be optimistic and expect brighter, sunnier mornings but be prepared for them by cleaning the inside of both front and rear screens to improve vision.
- Even with a clean screen, expect glare to obscure your vision, particularly if travelling east in the mornings and west in the evenings. Always have a pair of sunglasses in the car.
- Even spring days can produce enough sun to raise the cabin temperature significantly in a parked car left in direct sunlight so consider anything inside that might deteriorate as a result.

NUMBER PLATE THEFTS

Theft of vehicle number plates is becoming a serious problem nationwide. It now accounts for 30% of all recorded crime in the High Wycombe police area for instance. Although most stolen

plates are fitted to other vehicles to enable petty criminals to avoid speeding fines or paying for petrol, some are used for more serious crimes, for example where a getaway vehicle is involved.

Obviously you should report any number plate theft immediately to the police but not drive the vehicle until the plates are replaced. Tamper proof 'clutch head' screws are available for minimal cost and are worth fitting. In fact some Neighbourhood Policing Teams are issuing them free of charge – call 0845 850 5505 for more details.

250 CHARACTER TIP OF THE MONTH #1

Avoid sideswipes! On the motorway, identify foreign trucks early by looking for place names, number plates, signage. Keep out of their blind spot. Hang back and time your overtake in lane 2 only when lane 3 is clear. Be ready to move lane if needed.

CRASH FATALITIES A THING OF THE PAST?

Well not in the short term sadly but a recent BBC documentary gave us a fascinating insight into the huge amount of work being carried out by researchers from the car manufacturers, as well as the medical boffins.



The former are coming up with ever more ingenious ways to prevent a crash from happening in the first place, whilst the latter are making amazing progress in discovering new ways of increasingly post trauma survivability. It seems that we're all going to be passengers in 40 or 50 years time, as the car will be in charge and collisions between vehicles just won't happen. Which is just as well, as 75% of **all** serious brain injury results from car crashes.

For now though we still need to equip business drivers with the attitude, information and judgemental skills to avoid crashes in the first place, and that can only be achieved through regular training sessions allied to regular communication about the salient issues.

MALE BRAVADO

Official figures show that men are nearly 70 per cent more likely to be involved in a car crash than women. Yet women outnumber men nearly six-to-one among those who seek to improve their driving through confidence or refresher driver training, according to data from the AA Charitable Trust.

Only 15 per cent of the 2000-plus who have put themselves forward for the charity's free Drive Confident courses are male. Yet 86 per cent of participants say Drive Confident has made them safer and three-quarters say it has helped them improve aspects of their driving such as motorways, roundabouts, night driving and driving in bad weather.

The charity's director and AA President Edmund King says: "In road safety terms, a lot of confidence is not necessarily a good thing, unless it's grounded in sound skills and a safe attitude. Men are involved in two thirds more crashes than women. Male dominance in statistics for speeding, in particular, suggests that confidence can often outstrip skill – with potentially fatal consequences.

"Given the safety record of men versus women, it appears the confidence shown by many male drivers may be misplaced."

NAILING THE DRUGGIES

The huge problem that is drug driving has been well documented in the media and in these pages we've often bemoaned the fact that there has been no robust roadside test to detect the signs of a driver's drug use.



The Home Office has now taken a small step forward, inasmuch as it's introducing a drug screening device which can be used at police stations without the need for a doctor to be present. If the test proves positive a blood sample can be taken immediately for evidential testing, reducing the chances of drug levels reducing during the existing wait for qualified medical personnel to be present.

It's a start but law abiding drivers will still have to be on the look out for impaired road users, as amazingly it's still not actually an offence to use illegal drugs while driving. It's the impairment effect the police have to prove.

250 CHARACTER TIP OF THE MONTH #2

Rain defence. Think about where water might collect to avoid losing grip in standing water – cambered bends; bottom of inclines; around bridges over streams; field irrigation channels; road verge-side gullies. If caught unawares don't brake hard.

CAMERA SHY

If you've ever been tempted to warn oncoming motorists about a mobile speed trap that you've just passed.....DON'T! In a recent court case a motorist who did just that was fined £175 and ordered to pay £250 costs, as well as an additional £15 victim surcharge.

The CPS said that it was entirely appropriate to proceed with such a case, as it was in the public interest and presented a realistic prospect of conviction.



Whilst we're on the subject of speed cameras, the government has promised that by April this year information relating to speed cameras will be more easily available to the public. Information could include data about collision rates at camera sites, vehicle speeds, the number of motorists prosecuted and the numbers offered training after offences have been committed.

A final comment on the speed issue – unsurprisingly a recent survey of several thousand company car drivers revealed that speeding is the most common offence, with over 59% confirming they had been caught. The next most common offence, representing nearly 11% of those polled, was using a mobile phone illegally whilst driving.

MORE ACCURATE POLICE DATA

The police will shortly have a far more robust method of recording the facts relating to collisions. Known as CRASH [Collision Recording And Sharing] it will provide a system for secure collection, validation, transmission and storage of road traffic collision reports to meet both police business needs and also Department of Transport statistical requirements.

This is important for the fleet industry because it facilitates the recording of data directly concerned with the nature of journey that the vehicle was involved in, leading to more knowledge about the involvement of at-work drivers in on-road incidents. More accurate knowledge of this type could help improve driver and road safety in a number of ways.

DRIVING LIKE A BAT OUT OF HELL



Whilst music can help reduce boredom on long journeys, the AA warns of dangers of too loud or too fast music. If music is above 60 beats per minute (bpm), listeners experience a faster heart rate and increased blood pressure.

Research has shown that up-tempo music may cause drivers to have twice the

number of accidents as those listening to slower music. A study gave 28 students different types of music, ranging from slow ballads to dance music, and monitored them as they used a driving simulator. Drivers who were listening to music with a fast beat were found to be twice as likely to go through a red light and have twice as many accidents.

The respondents to a recent AA Populus poll voted Meatloaf's 'Bat out of hell' as their favourite song to drive to.

CORPORATE MANSLAUGHTER

Many of you will have already heard about the landmark case where the Gloucestershire company Cotswold Geotechnical Holdings was fined £385,000, having been convicted of the corporate manslaughter of an employee who died after a trench he was working in collapsed on top of him.

Of course this ruling is important, and yes it does have serious implications for all employers, but AA DriveTech will not be joining the band of less scrupulous driver risk management suppliers by suggesting to its customers that driver training interventions are a form of 'get-out-of-jail-free' card.

...and news from AA DriveTech itself:

FLEET CUSTOMER SURVEY

Thank you to all of you who responded to our annual fleet customer survey back in December. We appreciate your feedback and make a point of creating a detailed action plan if anybody highlights a specific issue that needs addressing.

Here are the key points that emerged from the survey:

94% of customers are happy with the service we provide; 96% are happy with training course delivery; 97% think we offer value for money; 94% of customers would recommend us to others.

You might also be interested to know why customers were implementing a training and risk management programme with AA DriveTech: 42% said to reduce crashes and their associated cost; 17% to ensure that their drivers were legally entitled to drive and 10% for legal compliance, fuel cost reduction and environmental impact reasons.

DRIVER CPC TEAM GROWS

As the countdown continues towards the time by which all LGV and PCV drivers will have had to fulfil their obligatory additional Driver CPC training, AA DriveTech has responded to increased customer demand by strengthening the dedicated team behind the scenes that manage the product development and deployment of courses for vehicles over 3.5 tonnes.

Norman Brennan has recently joined as Sales Manager and is ably supported by Claire Dennis who will be principally office-based in a business co-ordination role. Highly experienced senior trainer Dominic Pargeter comes across from the Training Department to become Driver CPC Operations Manager and will be both developing the courses and overseeing the 30 strong band of Driver CPC trained instructors. All report to Driver CPC programme Director Jason Vallint.

Any customers wishing to find out more about AA DriveTech's suite of Driver CPC courses should contact Claire on 01256 495761 or email drivercpc@AADrivetech.com

GEARING UP FOR THE FUTURE

We are giving serious consideration to creating a training course specifically for drivers of electric and hybrid-powered vehicles, which are quite clearly different from their fossil-fuelled cousins in a number of important ways. We realise that demand will be limited while the market for these vehicles becomes established but at the same time we recognize that more and more fleets are opting for this type of vehicle where it suits their business environment.

We would be grateful for your thoughts on this innovative step – encouraging and/or constructive comments should be forwarded to david.richards@AADrivetech.com

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