

driver abc attitude. behaviour. competence



Working together to eliminate road death and serious injuries

Bringing you important news for business drivers: January 2009

Remote control

If you're not already familiar with the expression ISA then we predict you will be by the end of 2009, as Intelligent Speed Adaptation seems to be on many people's lips at present in our industry.



In a nutshell, it's the automatic application of braking and throttle control by the engine management system as a result of input from a GPS tracking device that identifies the speed limit that's in force on the road on which the vehicle is travelling at the time. Once activated it ensures compliance with the speed limit, irrespective of the driver's behaviour.

Although the research and development around the system has been going on for the past ten years, it's now nearing reality and it's widely accepted that the UK occupational driver community will be some of the first to try it in anger, which could be as soon as 2010.

It's being suggested that the full intervention of the system be optional, at least in the early years, so drivers could just select the alert function only, confirming the speed limit in force on that particular road. At least this addresses one safety issue – drivers struggling to identify the speed limit applicable to a given stretch of road due to the absence of repeater signs.

Sub zero threat



There has been a spate of car thefts up and down the country, when drivers have left cars unattended whilst they de-frost during the recent spell of sub zero temperatures. In fact it's been suggested that gangs are now actively on the lookout for such vehicles, particularly in affluent areas.

Apart from the fact that an insurance claim may be challenged on the grounds of negligence, it's worth reminding drivers that this practice is actually illegal and can be subject to a £30 fine. Also, unless your car is in excess of 30 years old, it will warm up far quicker on the move than sitting stationary outside your house anyway and two minutes with an ice scraper has the added value of burning some calories as well!

Taxing texts

Trafficmaster has introduced a new, text-based congestion-alert service. Whilst we

applaud anything that helps drivers avoid hold-ups, cuts driver stress, increases efficiency and reduces fuel consumption, we are concerned about the potential distraction that such a system could create.



Admittedly you can programme it to only alert you before you leave but how many drivers are going to do that? As we said in Fleet News when asked for a comment "...I have my doubts whether that the majority of business drivers, who are already under enough pressure, would defer to that option."

Drivers have to use all in-vehicle communications devices with responsibility, which effectively means parked up in a safe place with the engine off.

Out of sight

A recent survey by SpecSavers rather worrying reveals that 26% of drivers admit to not ever having had an eye test since passing their driving test.



As we reported last year, compulsory eye tests every five years will be a mandatory requirement for EU drivers in two years time but until then we would once again urge employers to remind drivers to have annual eye tests, as problems are often not apparent until it's too late. Eye tests can also reveal early warning signs of a raft of other ailments, often not directly related to the eyes themselves.

Getting tough

Just before Christmas, the DfT revealed what were being promoted as tougher measures to deal with driving offenders but what had in reality already been outlined in the 2006 Road Safety Act. In essence this means:

- ⇒ Graduated fixed penalties for drivers who exceed the speed limit by a large margin, which could mean a ban after two convictions (likely to be spring 2010).
- ⇒ A reduction in the legal blood/alcohol limit from 80 mg/100 ml to 50 mg/100ml (2011 at the earliest, certainly after the next election and quite probably never).
- ⇒ Increased penalties for not wearing a seat belt (£30 to £60, sometime this year).
- ⇒ A proper test for drug-impaired drivers and consequently a new offence with harsher penalties than the equivalent drink/drive penalties (10 years of testing and research have yielded nothing of consequence so don't hold your breath but 2012 is a vague possibility).
- ⇒ The 'careless driving' offence gets downgraded from a mandatory court appearance to a £60 fixed penalty and three points, which most road safety campaigners agree sends the wrong message but it cuts bureaucracy and costs. (early 2010 looks likely).

Unidentified objects

Last year we reported on how all the EU member states are co-operating to allow driver and vehicle details to be made available to the relevant authorities in the event of legal transgressions. It seems the theory is one thing and the practice quite another, as thousands of foreign drivers are managing to elude the long arm of the law.



The lesson? Keep well back and maintain that cushion of space between you, because in the event of a collision the likelihood is that you won't have any redress

One foreign driver who didn't get away with it was Dutch lorry driver Klass Jan Rehorst, who was imprisoned for five years just before Christmas for killing a 37-old car driver during an irresponsible overtaking manoeuvre on a single carriageway section of the A1 last year.

Health & Safety conviction

The Health and Safety Executive comes in for a lot of criticism, mainly due to its lack of resources, but it threw the book at one employer recently over a vehicle-related workplace tragedy.

As a result of the needless death of an 18 year old employee at one of its sites, Associated Waste Management of Brighouse, Yorkshire was fined £75,000 and ordered to pay £10,000 costs after pleading guilty to breaching Section 2 (1) of the 1974 Health and Safety at Work Act.

After the hearing HSE inspector Paul Robinson said: "This incident is all the more tragic because it was avoidable. If the risks had been assessed, equipment properly maintained and safeguards put in place it might never have happened."

...and news from DriveTech itself:

We're strengthening our management team

As DriveTech continues to extend its reach within the driver education sector it has found an increasing need for an operations professional who could take an overview of the company as a whole, a post that has been ably filled by new recruit Roger Reynolds.

Before joining DriveTech as Operations Director, Roger held a variety of senior positions in the mobile telecommunications industry where customer service, innovation and rapid response to market demand are prerequisites. During spells with Cellnet, Orange, T-Mobile, Marconi Wireless and Ericsson, Roger acquired huge experience in both creating and developing various business units through the application of detailed operational planning.



We've signed the European Road Safety Charter



DriveTech has been accepted as a signatory to the European Road Safety Charter and has pledged to not only continue but develop its work in educating occupational drivers, offenders and learners. The company is one of only a handful of UK suppliers in the driver education and safety industry to be recognised in this way.

Smile!



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