





We trailed this story some nine months ago so DriveTech Newsletter readers are more likely than average to aware of the new legislation being introduced next year that mandates regular eyesight tests (even though it will be only every ten years for car drivers!). However 78% of the companies that Specsavers Corporate Eyecare polled a few weeks ago were blissfully unaware of the impending law change, which is worrying considering how long it can take some organisations to update health and safety-related policy.

In common with most other road safety practitioners AA DriveTech would strongly recommend a two yearly eye test for all those who drive in the course of their work and that completion of such is recorded within the fleet or HR departments' personnel records.

## **MISSILE ATTACK**

We've all seen them.....the bored youngsters lurking on the bridges over the motorways or dual carriageways. Sadly they present a real risk and business drivers are well advised to take this potential threat seriously.



According to Autoglass one in four motorists have had their vehicle damaged by a missile lobbed by jobs but as many as 81% of motorists have actually witnessed such behaviour taking place, even if it wasn't directly aimed at them. Amazingly though, 89% of witnesses never report the incident to the police, most probably because they are uncertain of the precise location it took place, so attacks are on the increase.

When driving at the legal limit on a motorway you are unlikely to survive having a brick through your windscreen so it pays to concentrate fully and look well ahead for perpetrators overhead. If you can change lanes safely to avoid being directly in the line of fire do so; even using the hard shoulder in these circumstances could be deemed to be an legitimate emergency response, particularly if you see a vehicle ahead being hit.

## **JAIL BRAKE**

A coach driver has been jailed for five years after he admitted causing death by dangerous driving and gross negligence manslaughter after the faulty brakes on his coach caused him to hit a car, in which the occupants died.

Police investigations revealed that the brake fault had been previously reported but not repaired, as a result of which the driver's business partner, who also admitted gross negligence manslaughter, was jailed for three years.



Although there have been similar prosecutions in the past involving good vehicles, buses and coaches, two things mark this case out as important for those responsible for grey fleets – this the first vehicle-related case where the charges were brought under the new Corporate Manslaughter Act and the first where an officer of the company has been held equally responsible for the offence, despite not being the driver. In the past the driver alone would have been held liable, even though it was effectively a mechanical fault that was the prime cause of the incident.

Now more than ever it is vital that employers have evidence of vehicle maintenance schedules being adhered to, irrespective of whether employees are driving the company's or their own vehicles for work purposes.

### **HOLE LOT OF TROUBLE**



With the thaw now well under way in most parts of the country, drivers should be on the look out for new potholes, which seem to be the inevitable result of prolonged snow and ice these days. They can not only cause damage to tyres, wheels and suspensions but in extreme cases when cornering can deflect the vehicle into the path of an oncoming one.

According to the AA, insurance claims in February 2009 were up by 250% purely as a result of pothole damage-related claims and, although £63 million was spent filling in potholes in 2008/9, some £47 million was also paid out in compensation and related costs so the problem is serious and widespread.

### **POST ELECTION CHANGES?**

On the run up to the general election Fleet News has tried to deduce the attitudes of the three main parties to the matter of formal, additional driving qualifications for occupational drivers. As we suspected, and have intimated as much in these pages in the past, nothing is likely to change for the foreseeable future.

“I want to see Britain ending up with the safest roads in the world,” says Paul Clark, the current Transport Minister. “At this stage we are seeing how the various programmes we have got are working

within this area. Let's continue to see whether the programmes that particularly focus on those who drive for work deliver."

In response to the question "Will there be a compulsory element though?" He replied "I would never rule anything out – I would be silly to do that. It's not on the agenda now but it's not something we would rule out."

The Conservatives and Liberal Democrats appeared to take a more voluntary approach. "Road safety is a cross party issue," says Lib Dem transport spokesman Norman Baker. "I'm a supporter of that (vocational qualifications for business drivers) but it would have to be voluntary. I don't want to further load business costs."



businesses."

This was a stance echoed by the Tories: "There is already an increasing trend towards continuous driver training," says Shadow Transport Minister Teresa Villiers, "but in terms of a work-based qualification I think we have to be careful of anything that involves compulsion – that would mean more red tape and more costs to

businesses."

So although it looks like there will be no mandatory requirement for driver training as such, most enlightened businesses will continue to deploy quality driver risk management for solid duty of care and cost saving reasons.

### **...AND NEWS FROM AA DRIVETECH ITSELF:**

AA DriveTech is the principal provider of the training and presentation materials that comprise the Thames Valley Police & Safer Roads Partnership Young Drivers Scheme. That scheme has now won the 'Young Drivers' category of the prestigious 2009 Prince Michael International Road Safety Awards.

In the first year since the scheme was launched in April 2008 over 4000 young drivers have completed the course, and follow-up assessment has shown that re-offending rates are 60% better than would have been expected had a fixed penalty notice been issued.

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