



Working together to eliminate road death and serious injuries

## Bringing you important news for business drivers: March 09

### Act accordingly

DriveTech has always taken a cautious view as to the likely impact of the Corporate Manslaughter Act and it comes as no surprise to us to learn that, to date, there have been no prosecutions, because resource for enforcement was always going to be an issue. Having said that, those responsible for vehicle fleets and drivers cannot afford to dismiss the Act's significance. All it takes is one successful prosecution to set a precedent and momentum could take over, and we know that at least two forces are actively looking for companies to make an example of.

As we've said before in these pages, it's highly unlikely that any customer working with DriveTech would have anything to fear because all are doing something to mitigate risk to a lesser or greater extent but it's nonetheless critical to keep policies and systems for checking compliance up date.

If you're in doubt and want some advice please call the FleetSafe Account Development Manager, Kelly Robertson, on 01344 467886 or email her at [fleetsafe@drivetech.co.uk](mailto:fleetsafe@drivetech.co.uk)

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### Staying in control

According to the Energy Savings Trust, business drivers spend eight days a month behind the wheel and some use their cars as many as 23 times a week, sometimes for very short journeys.

Another interesting fact – only 16% actually 'love driving for work', which leaves a worrying 84% who dislike it or who have some issue with it. Drivers with such concerns are likely to be at higher risk than those who are confident, relaxed, knowledgeable and

totally in control.....like those who have completed DriveTech's Real World Combination course.

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### **Legal but dangerous**

Findings by the highly regarded, Crowthorne-based research organisation TRL suggest that driving whilst on the phone using a legal hands free kit is likely to lengthen reaction times to beyond the level of somebody over the legal drink drive limit.

Despite this evidence the DfT have no plans to outlaw hands free kits for the foreseeable future.

This comes against the backdrop of the conviction recently of company director Lynne-Marie Howden for death by dangerous driving, as a result of her slamming into a car head on after she drifted into the opposite carriageway whilst deep in conversation.

At the risk of sounding like a worn out record, the fact that you're not holding a mobile device makes it no less risky to have the conversation whilst driving. It's physically impossible to concentrate on two entirely different tasks at the same time and yet have sufficient mental reserve to deal with an on-road crisis should it occur. If an incident occurs whilst you're on the phone, hands free or not, you are highly likely to crash...fact.

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### **Insurance scam**

Another topic which we've covered in the past but bears a repeat because it's on the increase once again is staged crashes, in an attempt to perpetrate insurance fraud.

The UK's largest handler of suspected fraudulent claims, Keoghs, publishes the annual Motor Fraud Index and this year it reveals that not only is it on the increase but that there are several new 'hot spots', notably in the North West and East London.

The most common trick is to identify a modern car that it likely to be insured - fleet vehicles are favourites of course – overtake it and then brake hard suddenly causing the classic rear end shunt. What the perpetrators are really after are the lucrative whiplash claims that can result.

### **Top tips:**

Look for old, badly maintained cars and vans with multiple occupants, most likely in their twenties

- Watch your mirrors for erratic road positioning and unnecessary overtaking manoeuvres by vehicles near you
  - Scan well ahead for likely vehicles in side junctions or parking areas adjacent to the road; they will be looking for likely candidates to pick up on and intimidate
  - If you feel that a threat is imminent, try and create as much space around you as possible to buy time
  - Look for a safe, crowded place to stop, like a petrol forecourt and park until the threat has gone or lost interest
  - If you have a safe way of recording the number plates of likely fraudsters, report the details to the police at the earliest opportunity
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### **Brain power**

It doesn't have to be hot outside to experience dehydration. Many drivers are just not taking on enough fluid and this could potentially cloud their judgment.

According to specialists Water Wellpoint, it takes just a 1% drop in hydration to cause a 12% loss in concentration; a 2% drop in hydration leads to a reduction in reaction times of 15% and a reduction in the crucial hand/eye co-ordination of 12%.

It may seem obvious but if drivers are regularly doing long journeys, it makes sense to always have a drink at hand, even during the cooler seasons.

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### **It's that time of year again**

The clocks go forward on Sunday March 29<sup>th</sup>, so drivers going to work on the following Monday are going to find some subtle changes in road conditions that they need to take account of:

- Many people like to take advantage of the lighter mornings and evenings by going out jogging, cycling or riding, so be prepared for increased activity of this sort, particularly on single track rural roads. ALWAYS BE PREPARED FOR

THEUNEXPECTED AROUND THAT BLIND BEND.

- This is a good opportunity to clean the inside of both the front and rear screens, to get the clearest view in the (hopefully) stronger sunlight.
- As the sun increases in strength over the coming weeks, be aware of raised cabin temperatures if the vehicle is left parked in direct sunlight. Remove any item that could deteriorate due to the raised temperature and ensure that you have a bottle of drinking water always on hand.
- As ambient temperatures rise tyres become more puncture-prone so check that the inflation pressures are as recommended by the manufacturer.
- Remember that sharp spring rain showers, even after a couple of days of dry weather, can make roads very slippery, particularly near filling stations where over-filled diesel powered vehicles re-join the road.

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**Issued by the DriveTech Communications Department.**

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