



Working together to eliminate road death and serious injuries

Bringing you important news for business drivers ~ May 2008

Director's nightmare becomes reality

A company director had to admit in court recently that she knew that the tyres on her company's pool car were defective and that their condition contributed to the crash in which an employee, and a member of the public in the employee's care, were killed.

Although the company in question was only fined £4,000, the case was heard before the new Corporate Manslaughter Bill became law and so the outcome might well be different under the prevailing circumstances now.

It really does emphasise the need for monthly vehicle condition checks that are somehow recorded, so that evidence of liability can be provided if called to do so. DriveTech can help in this regard, as part of our corporate risk assessment facility, so please contact your account manager or via tellmemore@drivetech.co.uk

Quick check

Following on from the above story, it's clear that employees must be regularly reminded of their responsibilities when it comes to ensuring that the vehicle they drive for work purposes is in a fundamentally safe condition. Here's DriveTech's suggestion for a vehicle check:

- Tyre inflation pressures. Always check them cold and use a proper gauge. Note the recommended pressures on a label and place it on the internal driver's door jamb or similar easy reference location. You should be insisting on a weekly check.
- Tyre condition. Quick visual check, particularly the area of the sidewall that might come into contact with kerbs. Internal damage can result from such contact so beware and look out for cuts and gouges. Don't forget – by law you must have at least 1.6 mm of tread depth over at least three quarters of the tread width. DriveTech would recommend a minimum of 3mm of tread depth over the **whole** tread width. As with the pressure, this should be a weekly routine.
- Brake wear. It's almost impossible to check brake pad condition these days without proper facilities but never ignore warning lights if they appear on the dashboard or graunching noises when you apply the brakes. Brake fluid level is however simple to check. The reservoir in modern cars is usually easy to spot, and often colour coded, so check it monthly
- Washer bottle level. Easy to check but often ignored (it's an endorseable offence to have an empty one). Always include proper additive in the top up water (never washing up liquid) and keep some spare mixture in the boot for emergencies.

- Check the level at least monthly.
- Oil level. This might not seem safety-related but engine blow ups as a result of low oil level are on the increase with both company-owned **and** company-funded vehicles. When they happen they are dramatic, cause an instant loss of power and the resultant oil smoke almost always reduce the vision of those behind. Check that dipstick weekly.
 - Lights. Keep the lenses clean and in winter check for blown bulbs by looking for the reflections in shop windows or similar reflective surfaces during twilight every day. When it's frosty always scrape off the ice before setting off. In summer, when many drivers might go for weeks without using their lights, you'll need to do a physical check of the lights with somebody's help every week.
 - Windscreens and window glass. Ensure they're **all** clean and clear before setting out but **never** use boiling water in cold weather. Also, don't forget the inside – keep windscreen wipes within easy reach, especially when there's a possibility of low winter sun. Most insurance companies allow free chip repairs by the specialists so don't let them develop into windscreen cracks; they only get bigger and if they are within the drivers immediate view are illegal anyway.
 - Wipers. Check condition every month and wipe the rubber blades with vinegar soaked newspaper to remove road grease and grime. Ensure the arm fixings are secure and the washer nozzles free of blockages, using a safety pin or similar.
 - Seat belts. Check for fabric fraying, buckle security and 'lock up' (by snapping the free belt downwards briskly with your hand). If you keep the rear belts locked in their buckles it will encourage rear seat passengers to belt up, as they'll be too uncomfortable to ignore!

Altered image



At the Fleet Business Show last month DriveTech introduced its new branding and image for all its fleet-orientated products and services, now being marketed under the DriveTech **fleetsafe** name.

The first product to be promoted under the new banner is a revised version of the Driving Monitor online risk management tool, which really is all you will need to manage your fleet safety and produce an audit trail of risk-reducing activity should it ever be needed.

Stud work

A British-made road safety aid is making a significant improvement to road safety around the world.



The SolarLite solar-powered road stud, made in Bicester, Oxfordshire, is now in use in 120 UK locations and 20 countries overseas. The product has built-in light emitting diodes which can give drivers up to 900 metres of visibility after dark, ten times more than a conventional 'catseye' containing a simple reflector.

This looks like being the first of a range of innovative driver warning and information systems from the British company. Trials are currently taking place of smart road markings which will warn of weather deterioration or the build-up of slow moving traffic.

Hayfever hazard

The late spring sunshine has acted as a catalyst for the distribution for the first burst of airborne pollen of the season and, as 21 per cent of motorists claim to be affected whilst driving, it can present a serious road safety hazard.

Whilst drivers should be encouraged to take remedies to combat the effects, it is vital that they read the label before purchasing to ensure that the product doesn't cause side effects that could compromise their judgment or alertness.

Professor Brian Lipworth at Ninewells Hospital and Medical School in Dundee said, "When you think that sneezing once whilst driving at 70 mph could mean traveling almost 300 feet with your eyes closed, it's clear that this is a very dangerous issue that could potentially lead to a fatal accident."

Grey with worry

According to a proper survey by genuine business consultants, there are now, for the first time, more companies in the UK offering 'cash-for-car' allowances than there are those offering fully-funded company cars. Clearly the so-called 'grey fleet' is on the increase, and with it comes concerns about appropriate insurance cover.



Inevitably drivers responsible for their own vehicle are going to try to find the best insurance deal possible which leads to many of them inadvertently failing to have the requisite class 1 business cover if they are driving for any reason for work purposes, even if it is occasionally.

The very minimum employers should be doing to ensure they don't fall foul of the law is to ensure that employees have:

- A current, valid driving licence
- Insurance cover that includes business use

DriveTech can help with suggesting ways of achieving both the above so don't hesitate to contact us at tellmemore@drivetech.co.uk

Premium hike

DriveTech customers are obviously aware of the dangers of using a mobile phone whilst driving, bluetooth hands free or not, but it seems thousands of drivers out there are STILL dicing with death and flouting the law by using hand helds whilst at the wheel. Although 185,000 drivers were caught during 2007, this could be just the tip of the iceberg – 10% of drivers in a recent survey admitted to using a hand held mobile whilst driving.



Although the penalties were increased last year (£60 + 3 penalty points) there is now an added incentive to comply – Allianz Insurance takes the view that the use of hand held mobiles whilst driving “is a needless and dangerous act” and has declared that they will raise the insurance premiums of those convicted for the offence.

Space and speed

At-work drivers are more likely to tailgate and speed on motorways and in towns than other drivers, research published by national road safety charity Brake and Green Flag reveals. The research indicates that the majority of at-work drivers are feeling pressurised to get somewhere fast, risking lives.



61% of at-work drivers admit leaving less than a two-second gap between their vehicle and the vehicle in front, compared to 40% of other drivers; 74% of at-work drivers admit speeding at 80 mph or more on motorways, compared to 49% of other drivers and 77% of at-work drivers admit driving at 35 mph in a 30 mph limit, compared to 62% of other drivers.

Speeding is known to be a contributory factor in more than a quarter of deaths on UK roads. In 2006, 856 people died and 4,998 people were seriously injured in crashes with ‘exceeding the speed limit’ or ‘travelling too fast for the conditions’ as a contributory factor.

Tailgating or ‘following too close’ was a contributory factor in at least 54 deaths in 2006, with research showing motorways are a particular hotspot for this problem.

At the end of the day it all about managing space around you effectively. The old adage still applies: ***Only a fool breaks the two second rule.***

Limit knowledge

It’s hardly surprising that convictions for speeding are on the increase – most van drivers don’t know what the speed limits are! 85% of drivers recently polled thought that the speed limits were the same for cars and car-derived vans, when in fact this is not always the case.



Vans over 2000 kg but below 7.5 tonnes (like the Ford Transit Connect or VW Caddy) are restricted to 50mph on single carriageways and 60mph on dual carriageways, only being allowed to travel at 70 mph on motorways.

It’s important that car drivers understand these rules too, as it’s no good getting annoyed by another driver’s seemingly slow progress

when all they are doing is complying with a speed limit different from theirs.

CO too much

Not strictly safety-related we realise but, hidden beneath the headlines of Chancellor Alistair Darling's first Budget, was the announcement most likely to have the biggest impact on fleet car operators.

Tax expert Alison Chapman predicts a "wasteland" of cars emitting slightly above 160g/km because corporation tax relief for companies will change from 1 April 2009, and 161g/km cars and above will cost the company significantly more to run.

"As a result I expect a range of cars to no longer have a market within the mainstream company car arena, although it will take time for companies to realise the effect," said Chapman of accountancy firm Deloitte. "You have one car at 160g/km and another at 161 and the company will say to the driver that they don't want them to have the higher emitting car."

The BVRLA and ACFO echoed worries about the new scheme.

"He [Darling] failed to appreciate just how much of a cliff edge is going to form and the impact it would have on the marketplace," said BVRLA boss John Lewis, who wanted at least two break points to ensure a smoother transition between different brands. ACFO agreed, calling for a tiered system as from a company's tax viewpoint the Government's decision makes no distinction between 161g/km and vehicles emitting over 200g/km.

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