



Working together to eliminate road death and serious injuries

Bringing you important news for business drivers – October 2009

Code of conduct



There is no question that, above all else, having the correct attitude towards driving holds the key to staying safe but you really need to be in possession of the facts about driving law in order to comply with them. According to a recent survey by a leasing company it appears that many business drivers are sadly lacking when it comes to knowledge of the Highway Code.

How, for instance, can you comply with the speed limits if you don't know what they are? A quarter of the interviewees failed to identify the correct speed limit on a dual carriageway.

Tailgating has often been cited as drivers' most annoying habits but under half of the respondents appeared to know about the two second rule for distance separation between vehicles.

But even if you know the law how safe are you if you can't see properly? 15% of those asked admitted to not having had an eye test within the previous two years.

Whatever our personal view on these kinds of surveys may be, it does point to a trend that those of us in the driver training industry know only too well does exist – drivers are just not as well informed as they should be in order to make optimum driving decisions.

Most of us would not consider the Highway Code the read of choice in those rare leisure moments, which is why most drivers have not consulted a copy since they passed their test but it really does pay to re-visit it from time to time.

Why not run a Highway Code competition internally amongst your fleet drivers? If the winning prize is worth having, and you generate enough participation, it could be an effective way to avoid a costly collision.

Dead reckoning



A Glasgow woman has been jailed for causing the death of a motorcyclist, as a result of a momentary lapse of concentration. She was convicted under the new 'causing death by careless driving' ruling which was introduced earlier this year under the latest provisions of the 2006 Road Safety Act.

What has this got to do with driving for work purposes you might ask?

Just consider for a moment the impact on your organisation if a key worker was convicted and jailed in these circumstances? Bad enough that there would be considerable business disruption caused by the prolonged absence of the employee but what if the police decided there was justification for investigating the causes in relation to the influence of the work environment?

Can you be sure that the employee wasn't having to deal with an incoming phone call from the office, wasn't texting information requested by a work colleague, wasn't fiddling with sat nav because there was confusion about the location of the next sales call or quite simply made a bad judgement call because he or she was stressed or tired as a result of work pressures? This may sound a bit alarmist but could be the sort of excuse an employee would use and the police would be duty bound to consider the evidence.

Are your policies and procedures robust enough to withstand a potential risk of this type?

Danger money



Research from another leading leasing business has revealed that nearly half of all company car drivers have been involved in a collision in the past year and nearly 70% of them were declared 'at fault' incidents.

Given that fact that this one company alone is managing 21,000 vehicles, and an average repair cost is £860, this equates to someone – either the insurer or the companies themselves if they are self-insured – picking up £8.1 million worth of direct cost as a result of driver error. And then there's the non direct costs to consider too.....

It begs the question, just how many products or services do you have to sell to re-coup this money? Or, to put it another way, what would the bottom line look like at year end without this cost to bear?

Making the point



It seems many organisations are still failing to get the message across to their own employees using their own cars for business – the so-called ‘grey fleet’ – that they, the employer, still have a legal responsibility for ensuring that any vehicles driven for business are legally compliant.

Ann Dukanovic at Kaba Door Systems sums it up neatly: “I merely state that we are contract hiring the car from them for business use, as opposed to from a leasing company, and that as Fleet Manager I have a right to ensure the vehicle is maintained and run in a safe and legal manner. It takes five minutes to sink in and then they understand.”

But it’s not just the absence of the obvious safety checks, like tyre, brake and washer reservoir condition, that are of concern. Employees are increasingly taking chances by not complying with maintenance schedules. For instance, hundreds of cars will be on the road today being driven with dangerously low engine oil levels – a sudden engine seizure or full scale blow up at speed can pose a serious threat to the safety of driver, passengers and other road users.

There has been a lot of discussion about this whole issue over several years and, in the absence of a definitive court case to prove precedent, it is a tough call but all the legal experts in the field believe that employers are correct to exercise their duty of care in this way.

The Department of Transport concurs: “Driving at work needs to be treated in the same way as other work activities – ownership of a vehicle is irrelevant.”

I hate Mondays.....



Another leasing company has trawled through its data and confirmed that Monday is now officially the worse day for collisions involving at-work drivers.

The majority of collisions appear to happen between 08.00 and 10.00, suggesting that either fatigue or the ‘morning after the weekend’ effect is

playing a part. As this period is clearly now 'high risk' now might be the time to investigate if there is a way to influence a change of behaviour in your organisation that reduces the need to travel then.

You couldn't make it up.....



A poll of 4,000 women drivers has revealed that 27% admit to applying make-up whilst behind the wheel. Three per cent of respondents even confessed to causing a collision as a result, clearly something which is avoidable and irresponsible.

As it's likely a high percentage of these risk-takers will be business women, it's worth highlighting that the law changed fairly recently and that there are much more severe penalties for 'incidents caused by lapses in concentration'.

To prove the point, a driver in North Wales hit the headlines last year when she was fined £200 and had six penalty points applied to her licence when convicted of careless driving whilst applying make-up and travelling at 32 mph on the A490 in her Vauxhall Astra.

Leap in the dark



It's frightening, it's unexpected and it can catch out even the most experienced driver. A deer strike. It may not have happened to you yet but it definitely happened to 74,000 other motorists last year and the problem is getting worse, as the deer population, at 1.5 million, is the highest at any time since the Norman Conquest.

And autumn time is peak season for deer activity so it's worth alerting your business drivers, particularly those who drive in rural areas, to exercise extreme caution at dawn and dusk. When collisions do happen, they are often more severe than hitting another vehicle. Modern vehicles are design to crumple in a managed fashion. Hitting a one ton deer is akin to hitting a concrete wall and, even with airbags, it's going to produce a significant trauma for the occupants. Hardly surprising then that deer impacts often lead to complete vehicle write-offs.

There are some practical steps you can take:

- Slow down when you come across deer warning signs
- Be particularly observant and careful around wooded and forested areas adjacent to the road
- Use dipped headlights and scan both road edges for deer eye reflections

- Remember that one deer almost certainly means there will be others following
- Be very aware of the road surface condition and be prepared to make an emergency stop
- Think about possible escape routes if you do have to make a severe avoidance manoeuvre
- If you have a collision, do not attempt to approach or touch an injured deer. Call the emergency services and let them deal with it

Discount offer



With winter approaching and the clocks going back on Sunday October 25th we will all be driving far more in the hours of darkness, so what better time to offer your drivers a 'winter vision pack' consisting of a bottle of screen wash, a can of de-icer and a windscreen ice scraper.

The packs retail at £9.99 but we are offering them to DriveTech FleetSafe customers at £5.00 including vat and delivery. However, to achieve this very attractive discount, we do need a minimum order 200 units and an approved purchase order.

Any readers that are interested in taking advantage of this offer should contact FleetSafe Business Development Manager Suzanne Linturn on 07827 894951 or on suzanne.linturn@drivetech.co.uk

.....and news from DriveTech itself:

We mentioned DriveTech's planned move to the AA's headquarters at Fanum House, Basingstoke in the last Fleet e-newsletter. Well, the dates have been agreed and here is some more detail. DriveTech will be operating entirely normally up to noon on Thursday November 12th, at which point all company operational activities will cease in preparation for the wholesale move of people and equipment down to Basingstoke. Mobile numbers for key staff will remain unchanged so, in the event of a query, you will be able to reach your usual DriveTech contact.

DriveTech will then be operational in its new home from 08.00 on Monday November 16th.

If you have any concerns about booking your staff onto practical training or workshops, or have scheduled drivers to complete online risk assessments or online e-learning, please contact the manager of FleetSafe Customer Care, Sarah Austin, on 01344 467885 or via sarah.austin@drivetech.co.uk

At the same time as the move, we will also start the process of re-branding our company as AA DriveTech while remaining an independent company within the AA Group and as a legal entity in its

own right, DriveTech (UK) Limited. This process will take a couple of months to complete but this approach clearly demonstrates the AA's commitment to support the development of DriveTech's activities into the future. As we alluded to in the last e-newsletter, we will merge the AA Fleet operations into the DriveTech business which clearly demonstrates the AA's total commitment to becoming the pre-eminent supplier of driver risk management services to the UK fleet market.

We hope to be able to give you details of new contact numbers in our next communication to you, scheduled for Tuesday November 3.

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