

# WORK-RELATED ROAD SAFETY

This factsheet covers the safety of people at work on public roads; it is not concerned with the safety of people travelling to and from work.

In 2000, over 3000 people were killed and almost 40,000 injured in road traffic accidents. Research indicates that between a quarter and a third of all incidents involved someone who was at work at the time. The number of at-work road fatalities exceeds that of any other category of worker killed at work.

Car and van drivers who drive over 25,000 miles per annum are at approximately the same risk of an accident as a construction worker.

## Workers at risk

### Driving vehicles

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) estimates that over 10 million workers drive a licensed vehicle at some time in connection with their work. The vehicles include lorries, vans, taxis, buses, coaches, company cars, emergency service and utility vehicles, construction and agricultural machinery, motorcycles, mopeds and bicycles.

### Working on the road

This includes cleaning and maintenance workers, refuse collectors, postal workers and police and emergency service workers.

## Employer and employee duties

There is no specific legislation covering employer duties on road safety. Under the Health and Safety at Work Act employers must ensure that the safety of their employees and people affected by their work is maintained. Under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations employers must perform a risk assessment of all work activities including working on the roads.

A risk assessment of road safety should include:

- avoidance of the risk altogether, e.g. avoidance of unnecessary journeys or types of travel
- use of safe routes
- provision of suitable, properly maintained vehicles
- avoidance of excessive or badly secured loads
- adoption of suitable schedules to avoid excessive driving times, especially where night work or shift work is involved
- provision of rest and refreshment facilities
- provision of suitable seating, seat belts, leg room, etc.

- provision of communications equipment
- use of properly qualified drivers with the provision of all necessary training and information
- suitable procedures for dealing with accidents, breakdowns and other emergencies
- provision of suitable protective barriers and warning lights for road workers
- provision of highly visible clothing for road workers
- wherever possible, avoidance of work at night or in bad weather
- reporting and investigation of all incidents including near misses.

## Driving hours

Some 20,000 accidents were caused by drivers falling asleep at the wheel during 2000.

The optimum condition is to take a break of 15 minutes or more after driving for two hours.

Drivers' hours are restricted under both United Kingdom (UK) and European Union (EU) law. For drivers of goods vehicles, under UK rules, a driver must not drive for more than 10 hours per day and must not be on duty for more than 11 hours per day. Under EU rules, the maximum driving time is 9 hours per day (which can be increased to 10 hours twice per week). Drivers must take a break of at least 45 minutes after 4.5 hours of continuous driving. EU rules apply to vehicles over 3.5 tonnes driven in the UK or to other vehicles driven in a combination of the UK and other EU countries. UK rules apply to other vehicles driven solely in the UK.

For passenger vehicles, under UK rules, the maximum driving time is 10 hours per day. A break of at least 30 minutes must be taken after 5.5 hours continuous driving. Within any period of 8.5 hours, there must be total breaks of at least 45 minutes. Under EU rules, the maximum driving time is 9 hours per day (rising to 10 twice per week) with a break of at least 45 minutes after 4.5 hours continuous driving. The applicability of UK or EU rules depends on the nature and location of the journey and the number of seats on the vehicle.

Under EU rules, tachographs are used to record hours of driving, other work, breaks and rests for all goods vehicles over 3.5 tonnes and for some passenger vehicles.

### General requirements

All drivers must possess a licence appropriate to the size and nature of

the vehicle they drive. They must also possess valid insurance. Owners of vehicles must ensure that they are registered, currently licensed, display a tax disc and possess a valid test certificate if required.

All drivers are obliged to obey traffic legislation, the Highway Code and local regulations.

## Law enforcement

The police are normally responsible for investigating traffic incidents. Employers can be prosecuted for aiding and abetting, counselling or procuring the commission of road traffic offences by their employees. The HSE can get involved in the investigation and prosecution of traffic incidents when:

- vehicles are engaged in specific work activities, e.g. refuse collection
- workers not in vehicles are engaged in specific work activities, e.g. street cleaners
- vehicles are manoeuvring in, out or near their work premises.

### Action by safety reps

Safety reps have a crucial role to play in ensuring that employers meet their safety obligations. Safety reps should:

- encourage employers to carry out proper risk assessments
- check that journeys are on the safest route, normally on motorways
- confirm that journey schedules do not lead to driver fatigue or speeding
- establish that appropriate vehicles are used for the load and journey
- check that vehicles are properly maintained, repaired, tested and registered
- check that vehicles are fitted with all necessary, properly functioning safety and communications equipment
- ensure that workers are provided with appropriate training and information
- check that road work is properly fenced off from traffic
- ensure that road workers are provided with suitable clothing
- report, anonymously if necessary, persistent infringements by employers to the enforcement authorities.

### Action by drivers

Drivers, especially on their own, need to take safety precautions. These include:

- driving within speed limits
- wherever possible, avoidance of driving in bad weather
- taking appropriate breaks outside the vehicle (15 minutes every two hours is recommended) and rest periods

- taking appropriate refreshment
- sitting as upright as possible and using head restraints
- wearing a seat belt at all times
- ability to perform basic vehicle maintenance
- using safe practices when entering and leaving the vehicle
- making sure the load is properly securing and evenly distributed
- parking the vehicle or trailer in positions that will not obstruct traffic or the visibility of other drivers or pedestrians.

## Further reading

An HSE task group produced a report in 2001: *Reducing at-work road traffic accidents*, ISBN 0 7176 2239 8. Among the recommendations were:

- the HSE should, as soon as possible, develop generic guidance for employers and others on managing at-work road safety (most unions and safety specialists wanted a Code of Practice which would have more legal force)
- the HSE should campaign to alert employers that their occupational risk management should cover at-work road safety
- consideration should be given to how reporting of at-work road accidents should be included in the RIDDOR regulations
- police report forms should be amended to include questions about journey purpose
- the road safety enforcing authorities, led by the HSE, should develop ways to investigate at-work road traffic incidents and take appropriate enforcement action



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