

A background image showing a blurred night view of a highway with light trails from cars and streetlights.

Seasons Greetings from AA DriveTech

Welcome to your AA DriveTech newsletter.

At AA DriveTech we continue to deliver this informative newsletter on a regular basis. If you have a topic of interest you'd like us to include, please let us know by contacting your Account Manager.

Kind regards,
AA DriveTech Team

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Bad driving clips used as Police evidence

We acknowledge that our readers are committed to being responsible road users, but as we all know, there many around us on Britain' s roads every day that don' t share the same viewpoint.

More and more examples of bad driving are now appearing on the internet, thanks to the increasing affordability of dashcams.

But, more importantly, this footage is increasingly being used by the police and insurance companies to secure both convictions and financial recompense from the perpetrators of crashes.

Last month, a driver was sent to prison for dangerous driving, after police successfully prosecuted them using footage from a fellow motorist as the principal evidence. According to ' PoliceWitness' , a company set up to help people report dangerous drivers to the police, nearly 1,000 drivers have been charged on the basis of dashcam footage in the past two years.

With dashcam prices tumbling and quality improving all the time, these devices are likely to become one of the most popular Christmas presents this year. There are already nearly 3 million out there on UK roads, so expect a big increase over the coming months...and more irresponsible drivers brought to book as a result.



If you don't declare a driving impairment, your doctor will!

Doctors must inform the DVLA [or DVA in Northern Ireland], if a patient continues to drive against medical advice and fails to do this themselves. New draft guidance from the General Medical Council emphasises that it's a doctor's duty to disclose information to the DVLA or DVA, where the patient has failed to act.



The overhauled guidance clarifies that, if a patient does pose a risk of serious harm to the public by continuing to drive when they are not fit to do so, the doctor should contact the DVLA or DVA, even if they do not have the patient's consent to do so.

The guidance also emphasises that when they diagnose a patient's condition, or provide treatment, doctors should keep the patient's ability to drive safely at the forefront of their minds.

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Abbreviated Safety Advice for Drivers #1

After autumn gales, expect significant leaf fall and prepare accordingly - wet leaf mulch will reduce tyre grip dramatically. Add mud from a building site, or ploughed field, and it's a lethal cocktail. When cornering, reduce speed, use your brakes gently and progressively; apply lock smoothly to avoid the loss of front wheel grip [understeer]. If the car understeers, gently reduce the braking or steering effort that has caused it until the front wheels regain grip.

Driving behaviour traits

Distracted driving, speeding and lane hogging are commonplace among business drivers, new research suggests.

Half of drivers recently canvassed by a fleet management company admitted to driving while being distracted. More women admitted to being distracted on the road (57%) than men (43%).



The research also revealed that some 40% of respondents say they sometimes stay in the middle lane for longer than they should, with 18% saying the same for the outside lane.

However, it's perhaps the results relating to speeding which will worry road risk managers the most, with two thirds of drivers admitting to speeding. Drivers said they were most likely to speed on a motorway or dual carriageway, with 25% stating they frequently or very frequently exceeded speed limits there. Encouragingly though, 63% of drivers said they rarely or never exceeded speed limits in the highest risk environment for drivers - rural roads.

There was also a clear correlation between circumstances and drivers' likelihood to speed. Over 50% said they were more likely to speed when roads were quiet, and 20% said they were more likely to speed if there were no pedestrians or cyclists around.

Company car convictions

According to research involving 2,000 UK employees who drive as part of their job, 39% of business drivers said that they had received points on their licence for work-related driving misdemeanours. 62% of those with points on their licence were as a result of speeding offences.



Other offences committed by business drivers include driving without reasonable consideration for other road users (15%), driving without due care or attention (14%), traffic light-related offences (14%) and dangerous driving (10%). Business drivers with points on their licence, on average, have accrued seven points from work-related offences.

Despite more than a third of business drivers getting penalty points on their licence from work offences, almost three quarters say that they are confident they would pass their driving test again. However, this confidence might be misplaced, as 50% of business drivers admitted that driving training would make them better and safer drivers.

London crackdown

A new team of enforcement officers are being deployed at key junctions across London to crack down on illegal or inconsiderate behaviour, and other problems that cause congestion.

The 40-strong Transport for London (TfL) team - that will rise to 80 by next spring - will help deal with problems such as illegal stopping or unloading of deliveries, which can cause delays to drivers and bus passengers.



It will work closely with the TfL-funded Metropolitan Police Roads and Transport Policing Command, which was launched by the Mayor of London in January. The body's 2,300 officers makes it the largest policing command anywhere in the country.

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Abbreviated Safety Advice for Drivers #2

Snow problem. In snow, always keep your speed down. Compressed snow is effectively ice - ice has no grip at all. Fresh snow at the road edge is often better for steering grip. In snow, brake early and lightly. Keep every action smooth. If you start skidding, don't panic - reduce the accelerator, brake or steering inputs you've applied until the vehicle stabilises; turn the steering wheel into the skid, at the same time looking where you want to end up.

New scientific evidence regarding distraction dangers

A senior psychologist in the study of human behaviour and transport, Dr Neale Kinnear, along with Dr Alan Stevens, who is chief scientist and research director at TRL with internationally recognised expertise in 'human-machine interaction', say in a new report that texting engages three of the five key areas of distraction to a 'high' level – cognitive, visual and manual.



They also say that a mobile phone conversation engages three of five areas of distraction to a 'high' level – cognitive, audible and exposure time.

Figures from the Department for Transport (DfT) in 2013, found 2,995 cases where distraction in the vehicle was listed as a contributory factor in collisions. A further 1,627 cases were listed where distraction outside the vehicle was a contributory factor.

Nothing beats a break from driving

20% of 2,000 UK employees surveyed for Brake's Road Safety Week have admitted that they do not stop for a break when driving long distances. This is despite the Highway Code recommending that drivers take a 15-minute break every two hours.



The survey found that 18% of respondents were failing to take sufficient rest, and some business drivers were taking extreme measures to stay alert when driving, with 7% slapping themselves in order to stay alert and 2% doing maths out loud to keep refreshed.

More conventional methods of keeping alert while driving included winding down the window (50%), drinking strong coffee or tea (49%), listening to loud music (31%) and turning the temperature down (30%).

As we've said many times before in these pages, the only sure way to beat fatigue is to stop, get out, walk around and have a caffeine drink. If you still feel tired you must have a sleep – even 20 minutes will be beneficial - but be sure to set an alarm.

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Landmark legal case

Baldwins Crane Hire has become the first firm to be charged with corporate manslaughter where a company driver was killed. Lindsay Easton was driving a heavy crane down a steep road away from a wind farm at Scout Moor, Lancashire, when the vehicle crashed into an earth bank and fell from the road. It is alleged that the brakes failed.



After reviewing the evidence gathered by Lancashire Police and the Health and Safety Executive during their investigation into the death of Easton, Jane Wragg, specialist prosecutor at the Crown Prosecution Service, said: “ I have concluded that Baldwins Crane Hire should be charged with an offence of corporate manslaughter. I have also concluded that there is sufficient evidence to charge the company with offences under Section 2 and Section 3 of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974.”

Julia Messervy-Whiting, a partner at law firm Shakespeare Martineau, commented: “ Prosecutors have faced quite a lot of criticism for failing to make more of what was considered to be landmark legislation. As a consequence, the CPS is now pursuing more cases year-on-year and the trend is set to continue. “ It’ s in this context that companies and their insurers shouldn’ t dismiss the risk of prosecution.”

There is no ruling yet on the fine – it could be unlimited.

Crucial ruling on driving for work

Time spent travelling to and from first and last appointments by workers without a fixed office should be regarded as working time, the European Court of Justice has ruled. This time has not previously been considered as work by many employers.



It means organisations which employ people who have to routinely drive as part of their work, such as care workers, gas fitters and sales reps may be in breach of EU working time regulations.

This ruling underlines the importance of every employer having in place a proper system of driver risk management which demonstrates that they have taken all reasonable steps to safeguard the welfare of their driving employees.

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Latest crash cost data

Analysis of data from an accident management company's fleet of 173,600 vehicles shows that £25 million was paid last year by its customers for excess insurance payments because of crashes involving company drivers.



There was, however, a notable improvement in company car driver behaviour, demonstrated by the reduced number of collisions in which company car drivers were at fault – 34% during 2014, down 15% from the previous year.

There was a similar reduction in the frequency of incidents involving company cars colliding with a third party, down from almost 11,000 in 2013 to 8,500 in 2014. However, 52% of all crashes involving company cars were due to damage from third parties. Notably, more than 3,000 company cars had a third party crash into the back of them, and almost 4,700 vehicles were hit by a third party while parked.

In addition, there were still 7,000 incidents involving no other road user and which can only be attributed to driver error. The cost to businesses within just this small group was £5.4 million, which represents almost a quarter of the total bill for crashes overall.

Potholes still making an impact

According to Fleet News, two-thirds of company car and van drivers have suffered damage to their vehicle as a result of hitting a pothole in the past year. It follows separate research that shows almost 29,000 drivers made claims against councils for damage caused to their vehicles by potholes in the last financial year, resulting in £2 million being paid out.



200 local highway authorities in England, Scotland and Wales dealt with 28,971 compensation claims between them in 2014/15. Councils refused the bulk of claims, agreeing to pay out in just 25% of cases.

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Fatal crash led to transport manager disqualification

A transport manager's "lack of regard for the law" contributed to the deaths of two cyclists, a traffic commissioner has ruled. Disqualifying Fry's Logistics and Mark Fry from holding or obtaining an operator's licence for 10 years, Sarah Bell said the company had put commercial concerns first, with compliance a poor second.



Fry's Logistics was investigated after one of its drivers, Robert Palmer, fell asleep behind the wheel and killed two cyclists on the A30 in Cornwall in July, 2013. Palmer was jailed for eight and a half years after pleading guilty to causing death by dangerous driving and a further charge of dangerous driving.

Following the incident, the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency conducted an investigation into the operator's compliance with the drivers' hours and tachograph rules and the working time directive requirements. In March 2015, shortly after the conclusion of the police investigation, the traffic examiner conducted a follow up investigation and concluded that there was ongoing serious non-compliance.

Safety award

An AA patrol has received an international road safety award for a campaign he developed to remind drivers to do a ‘double-take’ for those on two wheels, as failure to look properly increasingly contributes to road accidents.



Tony Rich from Warrington, Cheshire, received the FIM (Fédération Internationale de Motocyclisme) Road Safety Award for the AA Think Bikes campaign at a presentation in Jerez, Spain.

The international judging panel appreciated the simplicity of the concept, which uses small stickers for the side mirrors of a vehicle to remind drivers to do a ‘double-take’ for those on two wheels. There is a bicycle sticker for the passenger side and a motorcycle one for the driver side.

‘Failure to look properly’ has increased significantly, from being recorded in 32% of road collisions in 2005 to 44% last year.

Tony Rich says: “Motorcyclists are disproportionately represented in casualty stats but they don’t just appear from nowhere. It’s alarming that failure to look has increased significantly in the last ten years. Drivers need to ‘Think Bikes’ at all times; and the campaign helps reinforce awareness that the road is a shared space.

“We would encourage all drivers to use the free stickers and do a ‘double-take’ in their mirrors for cyclists and motorcyclists.”

Think Bikes stickers are available free of charge to organisations and individuals by emailing publicaffairs@theaa.com

AA DriveTech Christmas opening hours

December, 23	8am– 8pm
December, 24	8am– 2pm
December, 25-28	closed
December, 29-31	9am– 4pm
January, 1	closed
January, 2-3	8am– 3pm
January, 4	8am– 8pm



We wish all of our readers a very happy, and safe, Christmas & New Year!

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