

Wilkins Safety Group

Weekly Update Newsletter



Welcome to this issue - Friday 18th November 2011 - of our Update Newsletter

Please feel free to forward this newsletter to colleagues and friends.

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Winter Driving

It is almost one year since the start of last year's snow, which caused major problems and headaches to many companies throughout the UK. Now is the time to think about your vehicles and staff, before it starts again.



Bosses urged to cut bad weather journeys

Once again the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) has urged employers to ensure employees are not making unnecessary road journeys, with treacherous weather conditions expected around the UK over this winter.

RoSPA Occupational Safety spokesperson, said driving for work was now "recognised as the most dangerous thing that most people did as part of their job".

About 20 people are killed and 250 seriously injured every week in crashes involving someone driving, riding or otherwise using the road for work purposes.

RoSPA is urging employers to consider:

- rescheduling meetings
- holding meetings by video links or teleconferencing
- whether a simple telephone call might suffice on some occasions
- safer modes of transport, such as rail travel.



RoSPA said: "Employers should ensure they have systems in place to carry out risk assessments to judge if journeys are really necessary, especially during winter months when we see an increase in road accident rates."

They added, "Employers need to be thinking about this issue now in the light of the forecast of prolonged periods of severe weather this winter."

RoSPA advises employers to deal with the issue as part of their regular occupational road risk assessments and develop practical guidelines for their staff.

Employers have a duty under health and safety law to take sensible steps to ensure the safety of their staff and others when driving for work.



Make sure the journey is essential for the job in hand.

For more Winter Driving tips look at this link: [rospa winter driving tips](#)

The following are suggestions for company vehicle use and driving at work. After the very bad weather conditions experienced during the winter of 2010/2011, we encourage all companies to have the correct precautions, procedures and policies in place and ensure all vehicles used are 'fit for purpose' and ready for the adverse weather.

Driving at Work Policy including vehicle policy

1. Policy Statement

Driving is among the most hazardous tasks performed by employees. Legislation places a duty on the employer to provide a safe working environment; this is also extended to driving on business. It is a requirement for staff to follow safe driving practices. This includes steps to ensure the driver's total concentration and safe operation of vehicles, such as determining

clear directions before departing, refraining from operating equipment such as mobile phones while the vehicle is moving, and not operating a vehicle when the driver's ability is impaired. Drivers are expected to follow defensive driving principles, driving regulations i.e. The Highway Code to prevent accidents.

2. Code of Conduct

Our Company expects all staff whilst driving on company business to comply with traffic legislation, be conscious of road safety and demonstrate safe driving and other good road safety habits when driving. The following actions will be viewed as serious breaches of conduct:

- Drinking or under the influence of drugs while driving
- Driving while disqualified, or not correctly licensed
- Reckless or dangerous driving causing death or injury
- Failing to stop after an accident
- Any actions that warrant suspension of licence

3. Responsibility as an Employee

Staff that drive on company business, will:

- Ensure they hold a current driving licence.
- Immediately notify the Company if their driver licence has been suspended or cancelled or has limitations placed on it.
- Be responsible and accountable for their actions when driving on business.
- Assess driving hazards and anticipate "what if scenarios".
- Wear safety belts.
- Drive within legal speed limits.
- Report vehicle defects (hire cars) to your travel Booker and/or Management before the start of their journey (unless journey starts prior to the working day, then as soon as reasonably practicable).
- Comply with traffic legislation.
- Do not use a mobile phone (including hands free kit) when driving.
- Check all vehicles prior to the journey to ensure that vehicles are within safe operating conditions. Checks should include proper inflation of tyres clean windows, mirrors properly adjusted, brakes, lights in working order, windscreen wipers and wash in working order.
- Report any Accident or near miss incident to the Health and Safety Advisor and your Line Manager, including those that do not result in damage or injury.
- Take an accident report form on all journeys.
- Complete an accident report form on all accidents and report to the police, your Line Manager and the Health and Safety Advisor immediately (where reasonably practicable).
- Take regular and adequate rest breaks of at least 15 minutes for each 2 hours driven, and Stop when tired.
- Plan journey ahead, taking into consideration pre-journey work duties, the length of the trip and post journey commitments.
- Stay overnight if other than under exceptional circumstances driving time and non-driving duties exceed 11 hours or 400 miles in one day. If for unavoidable reasons you have to drive over these limits on an occasional day, considerable care must be taken to have regular breaks and avoid any risks of driving while tired.
- Take a taxi, train or car with a driver, when returning from long haul flights.
- Ensure that you are familiar with the vehicle that you are about to drive if you are unsure report this to our head office immediately.
- Complete annually an insurance undertaking form.
- Ensure that your vehicle has a valid MOT certificate and is in a roadworthy condition.
- Ensure that your vehicle has valid road tax.

- Ensure your insurance covers business travel. As a company we will not accept liability for any damage to privately owned vehicles.
- Ensure that you are not taking any medication that may impair your driving ability.

4. Training

Should a member of staff have an unacceptable level of accidents whilst driving on business, we may request that driver completes additional training, before allowing that person to drive on business again.

5. Responsibility as an Employer

Our Company will not require staff to drive under conditions which are considered unsafe and/or likely to create an unsafe environment, physical distress, fatigue, etc. We will do this by:

- Ensuring that a car hire company is used which provides hire cars which meet high standards of safety and are well maintained.
- Ensuring that staff are aware of their responsibility to check the vehicle prior to use.
- Ensuring that staff are comfortable driving the hire car that they are provided with.
- Ensuring that where additional training is required, through Risk Assessment, this will be provided on request.
- Managers required to manage work schedules to ensure that safe driving practices are maintained, taking into account individual driving needs and experience.
- Collation of statistics on accidents and near miss incidents to ensure continuous improvement of driving policy.
- Regular review of policy and procedures to ensure the development and quality of the driving policy.

6. Procedures

Instructions for Mobile phone use

A substantial body of research shows that using hand-held or hands-free mobile phone while driving is a significant distraction and substantially increases the risk of the driver crashing. Research shows that individuals are four times more likely to crash, injuring or killing themselves and/or other people.

Using a hands-free phone while driving, does not significantly reduce risks, because the problems are caused mainly by the mental distraction and divided attention. Mobile phones cause distractions in three ways:

- Taking hands off the wheel.
- Becoming engrossed in a conversation and not concentrating on the road.
- Mental distraction.

The use of mobile phones whilst driving is not acceptable except where a legally compliant hands free unit is installed, and even then it is strongly advised against. Staff should adopt the following principles:

- You must never use a mobile phone whilst driving unless you have a fully legally compliant hands-free unit and are an experienced driver used to handling such equipment: even in such cases you should never initiate calls whilst driving.
- Unless you have a hands-free unit your phone should be switched off, with divert all calls to voicemail and check messages when your vehicle is stationary.
- Never make calls, dial numbers or text while driving, even with a hands-free unit.

From a safety point of view, all use of mobile phones should be avoided while the vehicle is being driven, even with hands-free units, as drivers cannot fully concentrate on driving if they have to process and respond to phone calls. If the phone has to be left on (and this may only be the case where a legally compliant hands-free unit is installed), the driver should pull off the road (in a safe position) to make a call or take a call for any length of time. If in such

conditions you receive a call you should indicate that you are driving and that you will call back when stationary.

Drivers should also be aware that if you have an accident whilst using a hands-free device you may be prosecuted for driving without due care and attention.

7. What to do if you have an accident or near miss

Stop your vehicle at the scene or as close as is safe, always ensure your safety first. Complete the accident report form by collecting the following information at the scene:

- Details of other vehicle.
- Name and address of other driver.
- Name and address of any witnesses.
- Name of insurer.
- Description of incident.

Contact the police:

- If there are injuries.
- There is a disagreement over the accident.
- If you damage property other than your own.
- If you feel unsafe.
- To get the incident reference number.

Contact our head office:

- Notify travel of any/all injuries and vehicle damage sustained.
- Hand in completed accident report form to your Manager as soon as possible.

8. Recommended Driving Hours

- Daily driving hours must not exceed 10 hours more than twice a week.
- Maximum driving period 2 hours (followed by at least a 15 minute break out of the vehicle).
- Daily rest period 11 hours not driving or working.
- Weekly driving limit 56 hours.

These are not absolute limits but guidelines which you should not normally or regularly exceed.

You should also consider working hours spent not driving and reduce driving hours accordingly.

It should be remembered that the hours given here are a maximum and are given so that both you and the organisation stay within the law. Advice from the Royal Society for Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) is that the nature of the meeting and work undertaken needs to be taken into account in determining what is reasonable in terms of Driving and Work time. For example, they would view 5 hours total driving plus a full day's work at an event such as a meeting (where you might reasonably be expected to employ a large amount of mental activity) as being excessive whereas a shorter meeting or attendance at a less mentally intensive meeting would be conducive to a longer overall driving time.

There is no hard and fast rule and in essence the law requires risk assessment to be taken for each trip. In reality this means considering the purpose of the trip, the type of work which will be undertaken, and the comfort of the driver in making any journey. Other factors that need to be taken into account are the likely weather and traffic conditions etc.

The golden rule should be "always plan ahead" and, if in doubt, discuss with your line manager and health and safety advisor - the organisation does not expect you to drive unsafely or for uncomfortable distances or durations.

9. Ill-Health and Driving

Employees are responsible for ensuring that they are physically fit to drive. Should this change, their line manager must be informed as soon as possible. Drivers should also remember that some prescription drugs can cause drowsiness and affect the ability to drive safely. In the event that medication is necessary, employees should check with their GP or pharmacist before driving; even short distances.

Company Vehicles Policy

1. The Company absolutely prohibits Operatives from driving, whilst under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
2. Any driver taking prescription drugs must inform the company for approval to drive.
3. Drivers must inform the Company of any accidents, road traffic act offences or bans from driving. Drivers must also produce a current driving licence for annual inspection.
4. The drivers of company vehicles must ensure that they and all passengers wear seat-belts at all times.
5. Seats fitted to rear of vans for passengers must be secured to the chassis, forward facing and have seat belts. A partition / bulkhead must be fitted to stop loose materials flying forward in the event of an accident.
6. Drivers must take all due care and consideration whilst driving. As a driver of a company vehicle they are an ambassador of the company and any aggressive behaviour i.e. road rage will directly reflect on the company and will lead to disciplinary action.
7. Company vehicles must be kept clean and tidy.
8. Drivers are required to inspect vehicle tyres, brakes, lights, wipers and horn daily and reporting any defect to their supervisor.
9. The driver of the company vehicle is responsible for paying any road traffic act fines or parking tickets.
10. Where multiple persons drive vans, cars or trucks then a log requires to be kept detailing driver times, dates, mileage, etc.
11. The company prohibits smoking in company vehicles at all times.
12. Mobile Phones - The company prohibits personnel from answering or using mobile phones (hand held) whilst driving. Drivers should stop at a safe convenient location and use the phone. Where vehicles are fitted with hand free systems, drivers should only answer or use phone when it is safe to do so.

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If you would like to discuss any of the issues highlighted in this newsletter then drop an email to Jon on jon@wilkinssafety.co.uk or call the office [01458 253682](tel:01458253682)



Your Business is Safer
Your Business is Safer in Our Hands