

Bringing you important news for business drivers - April 2010

THIS MONTH WE'RE FOCUSING ON DRIVER CPC

Driver CPC is an EU directive that requires all heavy goods vehicle, large van, bus and coach driver to undertake 35 hours of 'approved' periodic training over a five year period. AA DriveTech will start to include articles in this newsletter to help our customers with large truck or bus fleets to understand some of the issues surrounding this new area of activity.

DRIVER CPC PRE TEST IDENTITY

Candidates for Driver CPC periodic training need to produce evidence of their entitlement to drive the relevant vehicle and prove their identity before the test or training can commence. Candidates may currently do this by way of a driving licence. Where the licence does not contain a photograph a valid passport is also required.

Candidates will still need to confirm their driving entitlement by producing their driving licence but, with effect from **27 April**, candidates who do not have a photocard licence will be able to use a valid UK ID Card issued by The Identity and Passport Service, as an alternative to their passport.

FIT TO DRIVE?



A new 'Statement of Fitness for Work' has been introduced over the last few weeks by the Department for Work and Pensions, in a bid to reduce the 172 million working days UK plc loses to employee sickness each year.

New employee 'fit notes', which have been introduced in place of old-fashioned 'sick notes', will require careful monitoring if staff affected drive as part of their job. The new Statement of Fitness for Work allows GPs to advise employers on one of two options:

Not fit for work: where their assessment of an employee is that they should not work for a stated period of time

The employee **may be fit for work** but may not be able to complete all of their normal duties or hours, or they may need some support to help them undertake their normal duties.

Research has proved that some prescription drugs (as well as medical conditions that are untreated) can have a detrimental effect on drivers' abilities to make appropriate judgements whilst behind the wheel. It is now crucial that fleet managers have some way of verifying if their drivers have been passed fit to drive by their doctors – if they don't and there was an incident involving a driver that shouldn't have been driving on medical grounds, it might be construed in law as management failure.

As far as AA Insurance is concerned the situation is black and white: “....if a GP has specifically advised a client not to drive, and then he does and is involved in an accident, **this would almost certainly give his insurer the right to avoid claims which he is not obliged to meet,**” said a spokesman.

DRIVER CPC SCAM

Despite a high profile campaign by both VOSA and the DSA it seems that Driver Qualification Exemption Cards (DQEC) are still being sold on the internet for £49 to gullible drivers who believe they are required to prove they are exempt from the requirement for additional training.

VOSA's Traffic Enforcement Policy spokesman Peter McIntyre says: “Our enforcement officers would not use this card to check driver exemption, as it has no legal validity. We don't want drivers to be spending money on something they don't need.”

HANDS FREE DOESN'T MEAN RISK FREE



Recent research published by the US found that 97.5% of people can't talk on a **hands-free** mobile phone whilst driving without impairment. Drivers on hands-free mobile phones took 20% longer to hit the brakes when needed and following distances increased 30%, as the drivers failed to keep pace with simulated traffic while driving.

Memory performance also declined 11%,

Whilst we recognise that banning the use of mobiles by driving employees may have significant commercial implications for some organisations, we would still urge staff not to make or take calls directly, but use their voicemail more frequently then pull over and park up to take messages when convenient. This break also gives the driver a brief rest hence reducing fatigue.

However, we do understand that legal hands free kits are widely used but we would highlight that even if a member of staff uses one, they can still be prosecuted by the police for not having proper control of the vehicle.

A final sobering thought on the subject for now – in the US, a court has ordered a \$7.5 million compensation pay out after an at-work driver killed two cyclists whilst deep in conversation on her mobile phone. There are not many companies that can shrug off this scale of financial penalty without consequences.

AA ROADSIDE PATROL STRIKE

As many leased company vehicles will have roadside recovery arrangements provided by the AA we thought it useful to update our readers on the situation regarding the threatened strike action:

"Members should rest assured that the majority of AA Patrols will continue the proud tradition of serving members at the roadside." This quote on Twitter, from one of our AA Patrols, underlines our commitment to maintaining service.

The union operating at the AA, the Independent Democratic Union (IDU) has announced its intention to run a two-day strike on May 2-3. We continue to believe that a strike, over new pension proposals, would be totally counter-productive and unnecessary, and can still be averted.

However we would like to reassure members that if a strike went ahead, a robust contingency plan would swing into action and service would still be offered. Nobody would be left stranded at the roadside. In the recent ballot, a majority of AA patrols either voted against strike action or did not vote at all. Service to members is in our patrols' blood and we expect that in the event of a strike, a good number would still be in the field. Combining their efforts with our contingency plans, it would be business as usual."

DRIVER CPC REQUIREMENTS CHANGE



Amendment to "A Guide to Periodic Training", reference page 4, section 2, "Who is Affected by the Requirements of Periodic Training?", paragraph 2.2, Existing Drivers (PCV).

The paragraph **currently states**:

'All drivers of PCV vehicles, holding a category D, D1, D+E or D1+E licence at 10 September 2008, will need to complete the 35 hours of periodic training before 10 September 2013, unless exempt (see 2.6). This also includes drivers who hold D1 entitlement by virtue of passing a car test pre-1997. After this, they will need to undertake a further 35 hours of training in every subsequent five-year period in order to retain their Driver CPC.'

The paragraph relating to 2.2 Existing Drivers (PCV) **should read**:

'All drivers of PCV vehicles, holding a full category D, D1, D+E or D1+E licence at 10 September 2008, will need to complete the 35 hours of periodic training before 10 September 2013, unless exempt (see 2.7). After this, they will need to undertake a further 35 hours of training in every subsequent five-year period in order to retain their Driver CPC.'

Note: D1 licence entitlement by virtue of passing a car test pre-1997 (licence Code 101 – not for hire or reward). Any driver with this restriction cannot drive professionally.'

ELEPHANT RACING BAN

There are moves afoot to curtail speed-limited trucks from overtaking each other when there is negligible speed differential - so called 'elephant racing' - and trials are currently underway on the following roads:

A mile-long uphill stretch of the A34 near East Ilsey, in Berkshire.

Just south of Junction 9 on the M11 near Saffron Walden in Essex.

A section of the M20 coming out of Dover in Kent.

The latest permanent ban is introduced on two sections of the A1M in Co Durham, which joins two other no-overtaking zones on the M42 near Birmingham and two sections of the A14 in Northamptonshire near Cold Ashby.

There's no doubt the trials have been successful. The A1M sections, the Highways Agency reports that non-lorry traffic was an impressive 17 percent faster during morning rush hour traffic, while travel times for lorries "was not adversely affected" said a spokesman.

The widening ban has been welcomed by the AA: "There are very definitely stretches that would be improved," said Andrew Howard, head of road safety. However he said that UK drivers would want the Highway Agency to go further. "A total ban would receive 100 percent support from the motorist."

DRIVETIME



Congratulations to AA DriveTech customer Diarmuid Fahy of ING Car Lease, who managed to get a detailed comment read out on Chris Evans' breakfast show recently. Apparently a car had managed to crash into a set traffic lights and Chris Evans was incredulous that this sort of thing can happen at all. But, as Diarmuid correctly pointed out, drivers often hit the hazard they are trying to avoid – the so-called 'Target Fixation' syndrome.

Off-road skills enhancement training, particularly Skid Avoidance, gets drivers to react in a different way in a crisis situation and encourages them to look towards where they want to end up. Amazingly hands and feet generally follow eyes, and in most cases the dangerous situation is defused. Sadly many drivers find out the hard, and expensive, way.

Any reader wishing to find out more about AA DriveTech skills enhancement training should contact FleetSafe Sales Coordinator Tracey Bass on 01256 495732 or on tracey.bass@AADrivetech.com

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