

Top 10 Tips – Work related road safety

Supplied by: Northamptonshire County Council - Road Safety Team



Annually around 3,400 people are killed and more than 44,500 seriously injured in accidents on Britain's roads. It is estimated that about 30% of these involve 'at-work' drivers and as many as 1,000 people die each year in occupational road crashes compared with under 350 in other work related incidents.

- 1.** A work related journey is any journey that you are required to take for your employer, whether in a company vehicle or your own private car. In the latter instance, this could simply be a short trip to the local garage, post office, pick up a colleague from another office or sent on a training course held at another branch. These are all classed as work-related journeys and you should make sure you have business cover specified on your insurance document.
- 2.** Your employer should check that you have a current driving license, MOT (if applicable), and insurance documentation at least once a year and keep a record of the checks.
- 3.** Wear your seatbelt - you don't get a second chance! The Department of Transport estimates that 4 in 10 adults still don't belt up and that around 10 front seat users are killed annually by unbelted rear seat passengers hitting them in a crash. Wearing seat belts saves lives and reduces the risk of serious injury in a crash. The Law requires everyone to wear a seat belt if one is available unless you are exempt. Exemption certificates are only available via your GP. It is illegal to carry children unrestrained.
- 4.** The position of your head restraints is very important because they are designed to prevent whiplash or any other serious injury. For the best protection it is crucial that anyone sitting in a seat with a head restraint fitted should make sure that the top of the rigid part of the restraint is positioned correctly, at, or just above, eye level and as close to the back of the head as possible.
- 5.** In order to provide protection, airbags fully inflate in less than one second, expanding at anything up to 160mph! This means that they inflate with a considerable amount of force. In the event of a crash the airbags will fully inflate to protect the driver and passengers, but by nature of their rapid deployment the following basic precaution should be observed: Do not sit any closer to the steering wheel than is absolutely necessary, There should be at least 10 inches (25cm) from the centre of the steering wheel and your chest. (NB Airbags differ from car to car, so ask the vehicle manufacturer for advice about the minimum distance between you and the airbag).
- 6.** Using a mobile phone whilst driving distracts attention from the road. Never use a handheld or hands-free mobile phone whilst driving. Switch it off, let the passenger use it or find a safe and legal place to park (with your engine off) before use. Research shows that a driver using a mobile phone whilst driving is about four times more likely to be involved in a crash (the risk is the same as being just over the legal drink/drive alcohol limit).

Top 10 Tips Supplied by...

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- 7.** Watch your speed and keep your distance! Driving too fast for road and traffic conditions and misjudging speed and distance are the two most common causes of crashes. Always drive at a safe speed and distance that will allow you to react and stop. The maximum speed limit may still be too fast in some road conditions and is not a target.
- 8.** Tyred out? You need good tyres to drive safely! Tyres are your only contact with the road and, through a contact patch about the size of a footprint, have to provide All of the grip for Steering, Braking and Acceleration. They also take care of your comfort and support the weight of the vehicle, the occupants and their luggage. If you look after your tyres they will perform better and last longer. Faulty tyres work less efficiently and don't last as long. Neglecting them could be expensive and could even cost you your life. They could also mean a heavy fine & points of your licence.
- 9.** Don't drive tired! Do not start a long journey (more than an hour) if you feel tired. Driving when tired reduces concentration and greatly increases your risk of having a crash. Long journeys without adequate breaks are recognised as contributing to driver fatigue. Sleep does not occur spontaneously or without warning. Fatigue is a highly dangerous state which has the potential for minor errors to develop into life threatening situations. 20% of crashes on motorways are caused by sleepiness.
- 10.** Plan your journey. Do a vehicle check before you set off. Make sure you know your route, take regular breaks (every hour or every 200 miles) and ensure you have a map or directions and a full tank of petrol, water and a snack in case you get delayed.

For an informal discussion, or more information regarding work-related road safety please contact Shirley J Harrison, Road Safety Officer on 01604 654436 or email sharrison@northamptonshire.gov.uk

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