



# Driving

## Health and Safety Employee's Guide

### Intention

This brief subject specific guide is intended to help you understand your obligations and provide sensible advice in relation to Driving.

### What's the problem?

For most people, driving is the most dangerous work activity that they will undertake. Research indicates that every week, around 20 people are killed and 250 seriously injured in crashes involving someone who was driving for work purposes.

Employees are encouraged to follow the guidance given, in order to minimise risk to themselves and other road users.

### What do I have to do?

#### Vehicle maintenance and checks

Diocese vehicles will be maintained by approved companies and in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations and schedules.

If you use your own vehicle in connection with work you must ensure that it is maintained in accordance with manufacturers recommended service intervals and in a roadworthy and legal condition at all times. If your vehicle is over three years old and based in the United Kingdom it requires an annual MOT test. If your vehicle is based in the Isle of Man, the Bailiwick of Guernsey or the Bailiwick of Jersey then the vehicle must instead be registered with the relevant government department **regardless of age**.

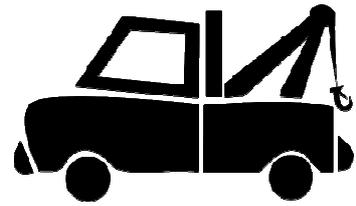
Regular checks should be carried out on vehicles by drivers, especially prior to undertaking a long journey. These should include:

- Oil, coolant and brake fluid levels
- Screen washer fluid level
- Wiper condition and operation
- Windscreen condition and cleanliness
- Tyre pressure, tread depth and general condition
- All lights are working
- Seatbelts are working

If any faults are found that may affect vehicle safety, the vehicle **MUST NOT** be used until they are remedied.

## Vehicle breakdown

Breaking down can be a stressful and worrying experience, particularly if you are alone or in an unfamiliar place. It can also be hazardous. Following the basic safety guidelines can help you reduce the risks:



If you are on the motorway, if at all possible leave at the next exit or pull into a service station. If this is not possible then the hard shoulder should be used accordingly:

- Use the hard shoulder lane to decelerate before stopping as far to the left as possible, preferably near an emergency telephone
- Turn on your hazard warning lights, along with sidelights if it is dark or visibility is poor. DO NOT display a red triangle or other warning device
- Get out of the car by the doors on the verge side. Ensure passengers also get out of the vehicle the same way
- Take note of the marker posts and contact the emergency services, where possible, using an emergency phone instead of a mobile phone
- If walking along the hard shoulder to a telephone, keep as far away from the traffic as possible
- DO NOT attempt even minor repairs

If your vehicle breaks down on an ordinary road or carriageway, you should:

- Leave your car in as safe a place as possible, ideally away from traffic
- Switch off the engine
- Switch on the hazard warning lights, along with sidelights if it's dark or if visibility is poor
- Display a red triangle (if you have one) on the same side of the road, at least 45 metres (147ft) behind
- Find the nearest telephone or use a mobile phone to call for assistance
- Wait for assistance in a safe place, away from your vehicle, keeping clear of the road and traffic
- Do not stand between your vehicle and oncoming traffic as you may obscure lights

## Tyre safety

You need good tyres to drive safely as they affect the steering, braking and acceleration of your vehicle. Faulty tyres work less efficiently and don't last as long; they could also mean a heavy fine and penalty points on your license. It is against the law to have:

- Car tyres with tread worn below 1.6mm
- A mix of radial and cross ply tyres
- Over or under inflated tyres
- Tyres with cuts, lumps, bulges or tears
- The wrong sort of tyre fitted

## *Tyre pressures and inflation*

Refer to the manufacturer's handbook for guidance on recommended pressures for your vehicle. Care must be taken when inflating a tyre. Only inflate the tyre to the manufacturer's recommended pressure for the type of driving to be undertaken.

Don't use tyre inflation devices near to cuts/open wounds etc. Tyre pressures should be checked every two weeks and when the tyres are cold (pressures are raised when warm).

## **Accidents**

Any accidents involving physical injury to an employee driving on diocese business (excluding commuting to and from work), or any accident involving a member of the public, must be reported through the diocese's accident reporting procedures.

## **Mobile Phones**

Research has shown that the potential for being involved in an accident whilst using a mobile phone can be significantly increased, due to the individual concentrating more on the phone conversation than on their immediate surroundings.

The law has now made it illegal to use a hand-held mobile phone when driving, even when you are stopped at traffic lights or in a queue of traffic. This includes making or receiving phone calls, pictures, text messaging or accessing the internet.

You can also be prosecuted for using a hands-free mobile phone if you fail to have proper control of the vehicle. If you drive carelessly or dangerously when using any phone the penalties can include disqualification, a large fine and up to two years imprisonment.

Mobile phones should be used in accordance with agreed policies when driving on diocese business.

## **Driver fatigue**

Research shows that physical fatigue and tiredness in drivers is a significant cause of accidents, particularly on motorways. Drivers should recognise the signs of fatigue, which are:

- Increased yawning
- Having trouble keeping your eyes open
- Not remembering the last few minutes
- Jerking your head or body from the brink of falling asleep



- Losing concentration
- Car veering off the road

If you feel sleepy when driving you should get off the road and into a safe parking area to take a break. To keep awake until you reach a suitable parking place, you should turn on the radio, open the window and/or increase the cold air ventilation.

To avoid fatigue, try the following tips:

- Plan your journey to include a 15 minute break every 2 hours
- Drink coffee or a high caffeine drink
- Don't start a long trip if you're already tired
- Ensure you have had sufficient sleep if starting your journey early
- Avoid driving between midnight and 6am (i.e. when you are likely to feel sleepy)

### **Driver eyesight**

Drivers should be able to read a number plate at the legal distance of around 20 metres (65 feet), using any corrective appliances such as glasses or contact lenses. The general recommendation is to have eyesight tested every two years. Having an eyesight test will usually identify the majority of common eyesight conditions and also give clues about other less common diseases

If there is a problem with your vision, because of either injury or disease or following an eyesight test, you must notify your line manager immediately.

### **Adverse weather**

The weather can be unpredictable and adverse weather conditions can occur suddenly. If you drive regularly for work you should ensure that you are prepared for these weather conditions. When adverse weather has been forecast, relevant details should be obtained to decide whether it is appropriate to travel. Alternative methods of travel may be more suitable, depending on the weather conditions. Driving in adverse weather should take account of visibility, ability to stop when roads are wet or icy and load being carried etc.

#### *Poor Visibility*

When visibility is seriously reduced you should drive at a safe distance with dipped headlights on. You may also use front and rear fog lights (in addition to the headlights) but you must switch them off when visibility improves.

### *Wet Weather*

In wet weather, stopping distances will be at least double those required for stopping on dry roads. This is because your tyres have less grip on the road. In wet weather:

- you should keep well back from the vehicle in front. This will increase your ability to see and plan ahead
- if the steering becomes unresponsive, it probably means that water is preventing the tyres from gripping the road. Ease off the accelerator and slow down gradually
- the rain and spray from vehicles may make it difficult to see and be seen. Use dipped headlights

### *Flooded roads*

Occasionally roads becoming flooded when there is a high rainfall over a short period of time.

- don't attempt to cross if water seems too deep
- drive slowly in first gear but keep the engine speed high by slipping the clutch to avoid stalling
- avoid the deepest water
- test brakes after driving through floods

### *Icy and Snowy Weather*

Great care should be taken when driving in icy or snowy weather. Vehicle drivers are advised to carry a spade, warm clothing, a warm drink and emergency food in case your vehicle breaks down.

When driving:

- keep well back from the vehicle in front as stopping distances can be ten times greater than on dry roads
- take care when overtaking gritting vehicles
- watch out for snowploughs, which may throw out snow on either side. Do not overtake them unless the lane you intend to use has been cleared
- drive extremely carefully when the roads are icy. Avoid sudden actions as these could cause a skid

### *Windy Weather*

High side vehicles are most affected by windy weather, but a strong gust can also blow a car off course. This can happen on stretches of road exposed to strong cross winds, or when passing bridges or gaps in hedges. In strong winds your vehicle may be affected by turbulence created by large vehicles. Motorcyclists are particularly affected, so keep well back from them when they are overtaking high sided vehicles.

## Personal Security

As part of your work you may be required to drive alone, and as such you are expected to adhere to the diocese's policy on lone working. Below is a checklist for personal security when driving:

- keep the doors of the vehicle locked, especially when in towns to avoid 'car-jacking'
- keep 'valuables' including briefcases etc. out of sight when driving and on parking, lock whatever is to be left behind in the boot
- when parking, if possible, drivers should use a manned car park and park near the exit. Reversing into parking spaces is also advised to allow drivers to drive off immediately
- keep the vehicle well maintained and with a surplus of fuel for the planned journey or to the next planned rest break or refuelling point
- keep a mobile phone with you to summon help or keep in contact with your manager/office
- avoid eye contact with other drivers and do not get into personal confrontation
- if you believe you are being followed, drive to a police station, if possible, or a crowded place
- always approach the vehicle with the key alarm/sender in hand, and be aware of people around you
- carry a torch (integral with the key if possible) to make locating the lock at night easier
- look in the back seat before entering and lock the car once seated

## Alcohol and Drugs

Driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs (whether prescribed or illegal substances) is against the law. Drugs and alcohol can both seriously impair your ability to drive and the effects may last for a number of hours (or days). There is no safe limit of alcohol and drugs as their affect can be dependent on a number of factors:

- weight
- sex
- age
- metabolism
- amount of food consumed
- amount and type of alcohol consumed



Before driving, employees must ensure they are fit to drive and have a level of alcohol below the maximum limit allowed, ideally zero and not under the influence of any drugs that may affect ability to drive (check with your GP for the effects of any prescribed or over the counter drugs).

If driving on diocese business this should be in accordance with the diocese policy. Consumption of alcohol whilst driving is prohibited both during working time or whilst driving a diocese vehicle. The possession, use or distribution of drugs/substances for non-medical purposes is strictly forbidden.

### **Refuelling of Vehicles**

Due to the risks of fire and explosion, when refuelling any vehicle, the following should be adhered to:

- do not use any naked flames whilst on the filling station forecourt
- do not use mobile phones
- do not smoke

Care should also be taken when walking on the forecourt due to the possibility of spilt diesel and petrol being present.

For those using an unfamiliar vehicle, check fuel type prior to dispensing. If using diesel, then gloves should be worn when refuelling.

### **Safe Speed**

One of the most significant risks for drivers and road users is inappropriate speed. This includes both exceeding the speed limits and driving within the limits but in unsuitable conditions.

When driving you should observe the following guidance:

- ensure you know the national speed limits for the roads and vehicle you are driving
- plan journeys allowing for poor weather, traffic delays etc
- obey posted speed limit signs at all times (even if late at night/early morning)
- reduce speeds for poor weather, busy roads, unfamiliar roads, high pedestrian activity etc

### **Further Advice and Information**

<http://think.direct.gov.uk/> **How can I get help?**

If you have any questions or if you require further information on this subject, please speak to your line manager or supervisor. You can also contact the Diocesan Health and Safety Representative Graham Palethorpe.