DUMFRIES GROUP OF ADVANCED MOTORISTS

NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2003

From the Chairman

By the time this reaches you, the clocks will have changed, and we shall have light at both ends of the day, so we can see where we are going. Hopefully, it'll be a bit warmer too.

The new courses will be well under way, bringing us even more full members than we have at the moment.

Just because we all drive to the system of car control, it doesn't stop us making the odd silly mistake along the way, and we all recognise when we do something wrong.

However, there are people out there who believe that the IAM badge makes them invincible, like Superman (although he only has a big "S" on his chest).

Case in point. Coming home from work in East Kilbride, heading down the motorway, I was in Lane 2 with cars backing up behind a lorry overtaking another lorry in Lane 1. I had also noticed a motorcycle in my rear view mirror a few moments before. Since I could see that there was no way the overtaking lorry was going to miraculously speed past its slower brother, I decided to go into Lane 1, to increase the safety distance between me and the vehicle in front, and also to get another car off my tail.

Before making the manoeuvre, I checked my mirrors, only to spot the motorcycle sitting no more than a foot off my rear near bumper! If I had made to complete the manoeuvre I would have knocked him off his bike. That would have been embarrassing for two reasons; 1) as an IAM driver, I should have superior observation skills and look out for other road users, and 2) I also ride a motorcycle.

After regaining a little from the shock of finding the motorcyclist so close to my rear, I got another shock, when I noticed the IAM badge in the middle of the screen on his fairing. And not a little badge either! That rider's ears must have been burning, after I had finished saying what I thought of him (all constructive criticism, of course). In the end, he moved into Lane 1 and accelerated past, disappearing off into the distance, presumably none the wiser about how close he had been to a ride in an ambulance.

Just because you have that IAM badge on the car or bike, it does not make you invincible….

As we come to the end of another season of events, I would like to thank all of those who have given their time to come along and give us talks, or organise table top rallies, Scalextric racing nights, and treasure hunts. Thank you also to

the Committee for the work they have done this year. Thank you all for your help. The Group continues to flourish because of the support of the people in it.

Please continue to support the Group.

"Ask not what the Group can do for you, but rather ask what you can do for the Group."

Secretary's report

This will be the last newsletter before the A.G.M. so I would like to thank the members of the committee for their support over the last year. Our committee this year has been somewhat under compliment which reduces the cross section of views of the group which can be represented. I would like to urge everyone to consider a spell on the committee so that more diverse views can be taken forward. Remember it is YOUR group. Just in case it is of concern, you should know, that the work load of committee members is not very great; there being only around four committee meetings per year.

Over the past year we have run one full course with 7 associates and also 3 trained on a one to one basis. The next course has just started with 9 associates under instruction. Graham Watson is in the process of re-testing one Senior Observer and helping one of our Observers to acheive the Senior Observer standard. He has also worked hard to train 4 new observers to the new I.A.M. standard.

The meetings have been well attended this year which is very reassuring so if anyone has any ideas of any topic for future meetings we would be delighted to hear from you.

Annual General Meeting

Notice is hereby given for the Annual General Meeting that will be held in the Birkhill Hotel, St Mary's Street, Dumfries on Monday the 12th May 2003 at 7.30p.m.

All members of the group are invited to attend and participate, but only full members, on the production of a valid IAM membership card, will be allowed to vote.

The evening won't all be taken up by AGM matters however, as on the fun side, time permitting, there will be a quiz.

What's on?

9 June sees the annual Treasure Hunt please meet up at Dock Park. Departures will be staggered between 6:30 and 7 pm.

The Nut behind the Wheel.

In general it was not until the 1950's that car manufacturers started to take a real and concerted interest in designing safety into their cars. Given that vehicles were produced in increasingly significant numbers from the early 1900's, it seems strange that it was well over half a century before there were any industry wide safety standards which could be applied to new cars. The attitude seemed to be that accidents and injury were the sole responsibility of the "nut behind the wheel". In fact it seems that it was not until the end of the 1950's that crash testing was implemented in any organised fashion, resulting in a better understanding of how vehicle structures and the human body acts under the effects of impact. In this period the work carried out was effectively voluntary on the part of the manufacturers. Safety was prompted to some extent, by Ralph Nader in the USA, the consumer's champion, who was involved in a few high profile court cases concerning the safety of vehicle design.

So it was, from the 1950's through to the 1980's, that more safety features were incorporated into vehicle design; as a result of the knowledge gained by the manufacturers themselves and promoted by legislation brought in by developed countries. Inevitably however some cars were safer than others with the likes of Volvo and Saab leading the field. Volvo, for example, made seatbelts standard equipment from 1959 while many other manufacturers waited until legislation forced their inclusion as a standard feature many years later. In the UK the fitting of front seat belts was required in 1967 but the fitment of rear belts was not mandatory until 1987. In America, initially, the airbag was promoted as a device for reducing the injuries of those who only used lap belts or chose not to use a seatbelt at all.

1949 Saab 92 one of the first cars to have a reinforced passenger cabin.

There was little consumer demand for more safety to be 'designed in', and it was not until the 1990's that proper legislation was introduced in Europe demanding manufacturers produce cars that performed well in a variety of impact situations. Despite some industry resistance schemes such as the NCAP rating have lead to manufacturers designing new cars to be safer and even modifying existing models to do better in the tests.

Now with increased consumer awareness of safety the old motto of "safety doesn't sell" has perhaps changed to "safety does sell".

Road and Traffic Safety in Indonesia

Four into two will go!

Thinking of heading for Asia on your holidays? Indonesia, the fourth most populated country in the world, has a poor road safety record with congested and undisciplined traffic.

The Indonesian Police reported a total of 12,769 traffic accidents in 1999, resulting in 9,954 deaths and 7,398 serious injuries. The high ratio of deaths to accidents is probably due to under-reporting of minor accidents, large numbers of accidents involving buses, and poor medical treatment.

There is generally a very low level of road safety awareness in Indonesia, buses and lorries are often dangerously overloaded and tend to travel at high speeds. Apparently most Indonesian drivers do not maintain safe following distance, and drivers tend to pass on both sides and even use the verge/shoulder for overtaking. It is common for drivers to create extra lanes regardless of the lane markings painted on the roads. Although Indonesia has a seatbelt law requiring the use of seatbelts in front seats, most Indonesian vehicles do not have seat belts fitted to the rear passenger seats.

Unmade country road: contrast with the City

In the event of an accident, Indonesia law requires that both drivers await the arrival of a police officer to report the accident. Although Indonesian law requires third party insurance, most Indonesian drivers are uninsured, and even when a vehicle is insured it is common for insurance companies to refuse to pay damages. If a pedestrian is injured, the driver of the vehicle is normally expected to assist in transporting the injured party to the hospital; Indonesian ambulance services, where available, are unreliable. In cases of traffic accidents resulting in death, it is not uncommon for bystanders to attack the driver perceived to be responsible. This is more common in rural areas and in accidents involving Indonesian drivers, but foreign drivers have occasionally been attacked by crowds at the scene of an accident; and you think driving on British roads is risky!

More on speed cameras

Road safety campaigners took issue with the the Government in the High Court recently over the policy on the visibility and location of safety cameras. The 'Slower Speeds Initiative' and 'Transport 2000' argued that government guidance requiring cameras to be highly visible and sited only where there was a crash history, was not based on evidence that this would reduce speed and casualties overall. They argued that since speeding is a crime, the visibility and siting regulations unlawfully restrict the enforcement of criminal law.

The outcome was that applications can be made for the use of hidden fixed speed cameras. The 'Slower Speeds Initiative' will be pressing for trials to be set up of covert versus overt cameras to establish comparative safety benefits.

Are we running out of road?

According to the SMMT (Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders) last year, for the first time ever, British new car registrations exceeded 2.5 million.

By the end of 2001 there were 27,790,025 cars on Britain's roads. So is this rise in vehicle numbers sustainable or will it result in total gridlock? During 2001, 1.85 million cars were taken off British roads, equivalent to removing around 6.5% of the total stock. By 2010 the industry expects 7.5% of the total number to be taken off the road each year as environmental legislation gets tougher. They calculate that in 20 years' time about 32 million cars will be on the road.

Given that since 1946 the number of cars has risen by over 15 fold, will this mere 15% increase lead to severe problems? The SMMT's view is that although congestion is clearly a problem, if measures are handled sensibly in the short to medium term there needn't be gridlock in 20 years.

Beware the Killer Trees of France!

The Gers Département region of South West France is well known for those trees lined roads often used in advertisements to typify France. Whilst these majestic platane (plane) trees do look very attractive, the death toll associated with them makes frightening reading.

France has a horrific accident rate, with twice as many deaths per year as the UK. The trees have become the centre ground between two warring factions;

those who believe the trees are responsible for the high accident rate, and those who want them to stay and prefer to blame the drivers themselves.

Between 1992 and 1995 some 6000 trees were cut down before the conservation backlash. Those who want them felled argue that they were put there by man and so can be removed by man. Some lengths of road have seen the actions of the ‘chainsaw commandos’ taking revenge for the deaths of motorists or motorcyclists. The ‘keep the trees’ faction believe the courts have dealt with such anti-tree activity leniently .

Some activists want to see 80% of the trees removed because they cause the deaths of many young people. Of course the real problem is excessive speed in the conditions, very often the roads are poor, undulating or winding.

French Platane tree and car come together

The trees in this area have been part of the landscape for many years, and in fact early records show their presence in the 15th Century. There was a further big phase of planting in the 17th Century. Originally these trees were thought to have been planted as a source of fuel and materials for passing military units. By the start of the 1900’s there were some 3 million trees in the area.

Unfortunately, despite the removal of many trees, accident figures for the area have seen little change. Some even say that with fewer trees many drivers have chosen to crash into each other instead, just to keep the accident figures up!

Although in some areas several kilometres of tree lined routes have been cleared, in others there has been quite a bit of work done to provide crash barriers; where possible supplemented with the planting of new trees further back from the road edge. Of course it will take some 100 years before they are

Gerstadt syndrome?

Ever been giving directions to an Associate only to find they turn left instead of right? Well don't worry too much because apparently there is a recognisable syndrome which can lead to knowledge/action dissociation. This is the same affect as when someone responds with "night" when they are shown a picture of the sun. Various experts around the world (such as Gerstadt, Hong and Diamond) have carried out investigations, into the relationship between cognition and action, mainly with children but the effect has also been found to occur with adults.

Longer buses on our roads.

New regulations on 1 April this year will allow longer buses on UK roads in line with EU requirements. The regulations will allow buses and coaches to be up to 15m long compared with the current maximum of 12m. Smaller twin axle buses will be up to 13.5m instead of 12m.

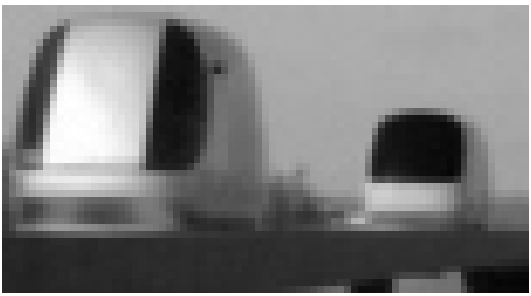
The Government had objected to longer buses on safety grounds as had ROSPA and the Pedestrians Association. It is likely that there will be substantial costs involved in making alterations to existing junctions, bus stops and street furniture to accommodate the longer vehicles.

The future is wood.

A report for the Department of Transport has concluded that fast-growing trees, such as willows, if planted over 25% of Britain's farmland, could produce enough fuel to power all the country's cars, lorries and buses. They would also help remove environmentally problematic carbon dioxide.

Taxi drivers to become redundant?

January saw the first passenger trials of the new Cardiff driverless taxi system. It operates one way only on its own designated and segregated route, guided by a metallic strip fixed to its roadway. It is electrically powered and each taxi can hold up to four people with a maximum speed of 25mph.



The cost is likely to be about the same as a bus fare but journey times are likely to be about 3 times quicker than car or bus. The system uses considerably less energy with only a 2 kw motor compared to a typical car rated at around 100 kw. The pollution free system is expected to have the final design and development phase completed by 2004.

Just for Observers

Special thanks go to those who have given up their valuable spare time to help, in the improvement of driving standards, by getting involved in the running of courses and the task of observing. It was pleasing to see that the recent observers meeting was particularly well attended.

Wave to the people on the bus

Greenpeace have donated a refurbished bus, with a difference, to the island of Islay. The bus has been converted to electric power and will be recharged overnight by the island's "Limpet" marine power station which, in turn, is powered by the action of waves. The conversion and refurbishment of the second hand bus cost around £60,000 and it will take 400,000 miles of travel to recover the conversion costs through the lower fuel costs (around 8p per mile compared with 23p for diesel).

Alan Jones writes about the Roadcraft Video.

I managed to convince my family to buy me a copy of "The Police Driver's Course on Advanced Driving based on Roadcraft", video for Christmas this year. I was interested in this video for a number of reasons.

Firstly, to identify what, if any, differences there are between the Police practice of the "System of Car Control" and the IAM's "Planned System of Driving." Just reading a copy of Roadcraft doesn't highlight these differences sufficiently well.

Secondly, to use it as a means of improving my driving skills. Even picking up one tip can be rewarding. Thirdly, I wanted to see whether it might help our Associates with their preparation for the Advanced Test.

The video tracks the progress of a group of police officers who have enrolled on a 3 week "Standard Response" course at the Metropolitan Police Driving School (Hendon, London), the place where the original System of Car Control was developed almost 50 years ago. Below are some of the aspects of the video which I found most interesting:

• Positive gear change is achieved by the use of thumbs up and thumbs down. When changing down against the gear spring action the police practice holding the gear stick with the thumbs down. This ensures the palm is always facing in the best direction. Alternatively, when changing up and moving the gear to the right, the thumb is up.

• When approaching traffic lights on green, check the traffic behind in case you have to stop, should the lights change to amber. Knowing what is behind can be used to influence your decision, remembering that if you are very close to the lights, you may cause an accident if you stop.

• A new expression: "Early vision, early decision."

• Excellent illustration of the use of the limit point. The message here is to achieve the correct speed, using the limit point, on the approach to a bend, then select the appropriate gear.

• Never forsake position for safety, ensure the position of the vehicle is not compromised. What the video encourages is that it is also possible to position ourselves within the vehicle so as to increase our observation.

• Excellent skid pan practice showing front and rear end skids and how to control them. Use of cadence braking to maintain directional control, for those who don't have ABS braking.

Overall an excellent acquisition. If anyone wants to borrow my copy please let me know.

Can you help us to cut costs?

Like all charities the Group is constantly under pressure to reduce outgoings to help make the books balance. A significant proportion of the yearly expenditure is on postage and printing costs. We are asking those members with access to the Internet/ e-mail to consider helping cut our costs by accepting electronic communications. You may not be aware, for example, that the newsletter is now available online, via the group's web site; just click on the 'News' section of the masthead.

We will be grateful if those who can help were to e-mail Helen Cameron **(dumfries@groups.iam.org.uk)** indicating that they are prepared to accept correspondence by e-mail and/or the Newsletter in electronic format. In the case of the Newsletter, the editor will send you an e-mail letting you know once the latest edition has been uploaded to the group web site.

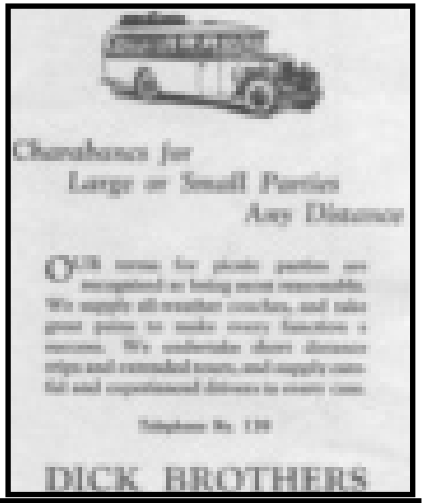
More facts and figures

According to research by the RAC you are more likely to encounter road rage if you drive a pastel coloured car, rather less if your vehicle is a deeper colour.

Also according to Top Gear magazine the average British driver will be locked out of his/her car nine times, use the horn 15,250 times, nod off 11 times, jump the lights 181 times and eat 21 lb of chocolate while driving. The average driver also spends 2 hrs 14 minutes kissing in cars and has sex in them six times! Just makes you wonder who got paid for researching that, and why?

New Zealand will not ban mobile phones when driving

"Banning cell phone use while driving would not produce more safety at a reasonable cost", says the New Zealand Land Transport Safety Authority.



Couple of adverts reproduced here from different times - 1934 to be exact. You may just be able to make out that it cost 15/- (75p) with Bowen's for a sight seeing trip to Loch Ken leaving from Edinburgh.

1000 mile traffic free road

The U.S. has started building a 990 mile long Antarctic Highway from McMurdo Sound to the South Pole. The first completed stretch involved extensive filling of crevasses. The road will cross a variety of landscapes from ice shelves to mountain ranges as high as the Alps. The road will not be surfaced but formed in the ice, and cleared every spring with bulldozers and snow ploughs, so allowing it to operate for around 100 days per year.

The road will allow the U.S. to service their South Pole base and in particular allow them to transport, in one piece, the 8 metre telescope which is to be built at the base. You won't be able to take your car on the route however, it will only be used by convoys of tracked vehicles averaging around 5 mph.

New Group Handbooks

New Observer and Associate Handbooks have been published recently. If you are an Observer then you will probably have already been issued with the Observer Handbook, if not you will receive one next time you are asked to observe.

OBSERVERS CORNER

The intention of this section is not to give you blanket instructions on a subject, but assistance to consider what is the best course of action. It is up to the driver to assess each individual scenario.

Which mirror and when?

A question that Observers often get asked, in one form or another, is "how do you decide when and which mirrors to use?"

Let's consider what help we can gain from PYADT, Roadcraft and the Highway Code. These don't give us much help other than to confirm the obvious i.e. we should use mirrors, as often as necessary to ensure we fully know what is happening behind and to each side.

So how often should we use our mirrors? Of course a time interval can't be prescribed, use depends on circumstances and the level of risk. If we suggested that an Associate should look in the mirror every 'x' seconds, there is a danger that mirrors will be used to a timescale and not related to the circumstances.

Could there be different mirror check requirements for these two scenarios?

Now let's consider why we should use our mirrors, after all many people seem to drive quite successfully and hardly ever look! The answer is, not that we simply want to know what is going on around us, but that we are trying to identify hazards or potential hazards (the information phase), not only from the actions of other road users, but which may be brought about through our actions.

Let us assume that we are on a wide, straight, open, lightly trafficked road with very few hazards. In this situation the major use of our mirrors is to ensure we know what is going on behind and to our sides. We need to look in all three mirrors from time to time to maintain a complete picture.

On a twisty, more heavily trafficked road, with numerous side entrances, then we need to carry out the same 'general' mirror checks as above. Additionally we need many more checks in response to the position of other vehicles behind and also in response to the numerous potential adjustments of position or speed we

may make as we approach corners or hazards, such as other road users or side roads and entrances.

So mirror checks could be divided into two types, the first a general observation check (building up picture of what is going on around you and looking for hazards) and the second being mirror checks made in specific response to planned actions or in response to each threat/perceived hazard. The frequency of these checks should be proportional to the level of risk.

The next element to be considered is "which mirrors do we use?" Well for general observation checks we need to use all three mirrors to varying degrees to suit the circumstances. For the additional checks in response to specific threats/perceived hazards or related to our planned actions, we need to ensure we use the mirrors appropriate to the situation.

<u>This means using the centre mirror together with the relevant door mirrors</u>. A basic rule of thumb is that you should be using the door mirror on the side where the potential danger is coming from and /or the one on the side of the car in which direction we are intending to move towards.

For example, if we were intending to turn right necessitating a wait in a hatched area for the opportunity to turn off, then we need to use the centre and offside mirror (as we are planning to move to the right) but also the nearside mirror, as potentially there is danger from following traffic (wishing to go straight on) passing us on the nearside.

<u>Handbrake or not?</u>

Another question often asked of Observers is "when should I apply my handbrake?"

Again, just like the use of mirrors, we can't prescribe hard and fast rules for all situations but maybe the following will help:

If you are stopping 'to stop', then handbrake up

But if you are stopping 'to go', then not necessarily so.

In other words, if you are simply coming up to a junction and stopping to check it is clear before moving off, then you don't necessarily need to use the handbrake but if at the same junction you have to wait a significant length of time for the traffic to clear, then you should consider using the handbrake.

A window to the future.

Did you know that it takes only one or two seconds to gain entry through the side window of a car fitted with conventional toughened glass? Security glazing is now starting to be offered as an option on certain vehicles, and this delays 'through the window entry' to around thirty seconds.

The AA, DfT and ABI have got together to assess and issue security ratings for new cars. This consists of a 5 star rating, one of which is awarded for prevention of theft from a vehicle and can only be awarded if the vehicle has this new glass.

Conceivably, a high security rating for a vehicle may reduce the overall insurance risk, and this should result in lower premiums. This may well lead to consumer pressure for security glazing to be provided as standard or an option, especially for those with high value vehicles living in higher risk areas.

Already some of the more expensive cars have other security features, as standard, such as automatic door locking. One of the results of improved vehicle security seems to be that there is an increasing trend for thieves to target the keys or the drivers, rather than trying to take vehicles when no one is around. The theft rate has reduced for new vehicles but increased for older cars.

As with all things new, there is a heavy cost associated with the latest technology. However in a relatively short timescale the price reduces, and the new feature becomes standard pretty well across the board. For example, this year all new cars are to be equipped with ABS. Just how long it is going to be before your next car is fitted with security glazing?

Bilingual road signs for Gaelic communities.

Lewis Macdonald, the Scottish deputy transport minister, has announced that existing road signs will be replaced with bilingual ones on nine trunk roads routes passing through areas where Gaelic is spoken.

Scotland's first Gaelic/English signs were approved by the Executive in spring 2001 on two trunk road routes. Additionally Highland Council will consulting with local communities about introducing more bilingual signs on other roads.

The Editor's Bit

We sent a colleague of mine to northern Ghana a few years ago to take charge of the construction of a new road funded by the World Bank.

He soon found that progress was frequently getting hampered as plant, materials and equipment seemed to gain the ability to grow legs and walk! This applied to anything and everything, whatever its size or usefulness. Everything that could 'walk' had to be secured. For instance, his Peugeot estate car had to have the jack and wheel brace welded together and in turn fixed to a further long chain which was welded to the boot floor. This, after losing several of the original accessories including the head rests!

One of the major problems was getting started in the mornings, because often the batteries on the plant would disappear overnight, and the fitters would have to be called out to get the machines started. Easier said than done when you take into account that the work front extended over about one hundred miles.

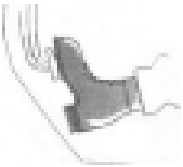
Having suffered particularly badly on one section of the works, he came up with a plan to solve all his problems - this involved enlisting the help of the local witch doctor. After an audience with the said doctor, and the payment of a not inconsiderable sum of money, the necessary arrangements were put in hand to have the 'jujus' put on batteries. My colleague was able to enjoy a celebratory evening drink with his workmates, safe in the knowledge that tomorrow they could get work underway at the crack of dawn.

As he drove to the compound the next morning he was pleased to see several batteries left by the side of the road, obviously his plan had worked. The first job was to get the fitters out to pick up the batteries and reinstall them in the plant, then they could get the work up and running. It was made all the more important that morning as there were two disabled machines which needed to be moved from the danger of flash floods. But there was a problem! The fitters refused to collect the batteries - they could not touch them; after all they had the 'jujus' on them.

So it was back to the witch doctor where the problem was discussed. This resulted in even more money being handed over in order to have the 'jujus' removed. And the lesson he learnt? Recognise when you are over a barrel and pay up.

The facts about speeding.

The DTLR 2001 Speed Survey showed that: Two thirds of cars and over half of 2 axle lorries were speeding in 30 mph built up areas. A quarter of drivers were speeding in 40 mph areas. Over half of cars on motorways and dual carriageways were speeding. Motorcyclists are the most likely to be speeding on 40 mph urban roads.



The survey also showed that those most likely to speed were: ~car drivers from high-income households, ~high-mileage drivers of newer, large cars, ~company car drivers and ~drivers who drive as part of their work. Additionally young, novice, male drivers were also more likely to speed.

Investigations have also shown that speed is a contributory factor in about one third of all road collisions. So in 2000, around 72,000 reported road accidents were due at least in part to someone driving or riding too fast. These accidents resulted in: the deaths of about 1,100 people, serious injuries to about 12,700 people and minor injuries to about 900,000 people.

Obviously accidents at higher speeds lead to more severe injuries. A person in a front seat wearing a belt is three times more likely to be seriously injured at an impact speed of 30 mph than at 20 mph. This rises to 5 times at an impact speed of 40 mph.

Unsurprisingly the figures are much worse for impact with pedestrians, where 90% of those struck by a car at 40 mph will be killed. If the impact speed is reduced to 30 mph then only around half will be killed, whereas for an impact speed of 20 mph then 90% of pedestrians will survive.

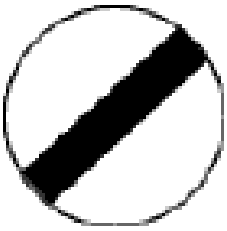
Drivers often justify their speeding on the basis that speed limits are unrealistic and that they are 'ordinary, safe speeding drivers'. The AA Foundation for Road Safety Research found that the public perceive 'serious speeding as dangerous, whilst moderate speeding is not' Their findings were that most drivers believe that it is the 'boy racer' and 'company car driver' that are the problem, rather than themselves.

The definition of speeding here could be widened to include, not only speeds in excess of the posted limit, but the inappropriate use of speed in particular circumstances. This may well be lower than the posted limit. So given the importance of the effects of speeding what can be done to change the behaviour of offending drivers?

Firstly it will be far easier to persuade people to drive at safer speeds if they understand and accept that driving too fast significantly increases their chances

of being involved in an accident, and significantly increases the chances of that accident being serious or fatal. The Government campaigns such as ***"Foolspeed'*** and ***'Think!'*** are useful tools but perhaps undermined by TV and film drama, advertising and even 'driving' programmes where a great deal of attention is given to high speed pursuits and the glamorisation of controlling, often badly, vehicles at high speed.

Arguably a start with improvements in driver training aspects has been made by the introduction of the hazard perception tests, but there is virtually no incentive for any driver to get involved in further training once they have passed their test. Only around 3% of drivers take any form of further driving instruction after passing their test. Ongoing education of drivers into the dangers associated with being on the road may encourage them to consider some form of advanced training once they have passed the statutory test. Perhaps more active incentives could be developed to help make ongoing training desirable. At the moment the average motorist sees little in it for him/her.



Many drivers don't know what this means

Some Local Authorities and Police Forces have developed Speed Awareness courses which, although they may help prevent re-offending, do little to encourage drivers not to speed before they are caught.

There are also things which could be done with the highway infrastructure such as separating pedestrians and cyclists from vehicles, traffic calming with signs explaining the reason for reduced speed limits, consistent application of sensible speed limits, plentiful and consistent signing with adequate sign visibility, and possibly posting speeding offences v injuries in certain locations. The consistent application of sensible limits should include ensuring that the posted limit is not unnecessarily low.

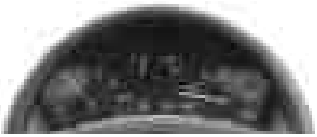
Enforcement is also an issue which could be addressed. The government expect to triple the number of speeding fines issued per annum by 2004 (from 2001) almost exclusively through the use of speed cameras. However over the past few years the number of Police traffic patrols has significantly reduced. Arguably the presence of a Police car has more of a sustained effect on speed and driver behaviour than a camera which may only have an effect at fixed locations. Perhaps the public would be better served if the Government target was for a three fold reduction in speeding offences rather than a three fold increase in speeding fines. Consistent application of enforcement and penalties may also be an area which would benefit from review.

Since statistics show that over 25% of road accidents involve drivers 'at work' this is likely to be another area where attention to driving habits including speeding could benefit overall road safety. Obviously an operator of large goods

vehicles already has complex rules relating to hours of work etc but conceivably this can put more pressure on drivers to speed in order to achieve time targets. A large number of employees drive cars or vans not subject to such regulations, and indeed there are employers who already set limits on daily driving time or distance, however they are in the minority.

Employers should be encouraged, or indeed be required, to adopt the MORR scheme (Management of Occupational Road Risk) to identify high risk drivers/ high risk journeys and set schedules that allow enough time for drivers to complete their journeys without speeding. Increasingly there is a move toward the expectation that employers should consider, as part of their health and safety at work procedures, the risks when employees are traveling on the road. Not only will this approach ensure that company drivers recognise that they are expected to comply with speed limits, but will lead to, not only the assessment of vehicle suitability for the work in hand, but will identify the potential need for further driver training.

The final area of exploration into the control of speed relates to vehicle design. These range from the simple introduction of easier to read speedometers clearly showing each speed limit in use on the roads, to electronic devices which allow the driver to easily set a limit on the vehicle speed or provide an audible warning when a limit is exceeded.



Trials have also been carried out on “External Vehicle Speed Control” systems where satellite navigation is used to locate each vehicle. This is combined with an in-car computer containing a digital road map encoded with the speed limits of each street in Britain and a device to cut off the fuel supply above the designated speed limit.

Perhaps overall the biggest area to be addressed is driver attitude. Whilst all of the foregoing may help ultimately it is only when speeding becomes recognised in our culture as something which is socially irresponsible and potentially dangerous, that real progress will be made.

Agreement on more pedestrian safety

In 2001, the European Commission and the European vehicle manufacturers entered into an agreement for the industry to make continuous pedestrian safety improvements from 2002 onwards.

This will involve incorporating, for instance, a series of design changes to give new vehicles safer front impact areas. The agreement should lead to long term improvements over this decade, with significant changes from a target date of October 2005, with a second phase of improvements applied from 2010. It is estimated that safer car fronts would save about 2,000 lives and 18,000 serious

injuries annually on EU roads, and could reduce serious and fatal pedestrian injuries in Britain by 20%.

Some of the first changes to be brought in are the banning of rigid bull bars on new vehicles from 2002 and the incorporation, of Anti-lock Brake Systems (ABS) on all new cars during 2003.

Facts not Fiction

The most popular new car in the UK is the Ford Focus, whilst Germany's best seller is the VW Golf. The Renault Clio is top in France, the Fiat Punto in Italy and the Citroen Xsara is the best seller in Spain.

You might not think it from a trip down the motorway but there are fewer lorries on our roads now than in 1990. In 1990 there were 623,352 trucks (over 3.5 tonnes) but only around 542,532 in 2001.

Apparently for every lorry that delivers to a supermarket there are around 1000 car journeys involved in carrying the goods away from the shop.

The year 2002 saw Honda commence exporting the Civic built in Swindon to Japan.

If cars were grid-locked, nose to tail, in both directions, along the Dumfries bypass between the roundabouts at Collin and the bottom of the Glen there would be around 3800 cars involved.

New bags on the horizon

The motor industry have announced that they are committed to using and developing advanced technologies to improve the safety of vehicles for the occupants. The key to this is research into airbags that potentially can provide levels of protection in excess of the requirements of current legislation.

Further research and development by industry is expected to result in a new generation of airbag restraint systems that will allow the deployment of airbags which are optimised to provide protection according to the occupants size and seating position.

Air bag development is also expected to provide increased protection in the event of a vehicle rollover during a collision, whilst research currently in progress could result in airbags helping to provide protection for pedestrians when in a collision with a car.

This newsletter was published by the Dumfries Group of Advanced Motorists; *more details of our activities can be found on our web site at:*

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