

Message from the Chairman

Welcome to a New Year of Advanced Motoring with Wessex Advanced Motorist Group, let's hope 2022 is a good driving one!

Firstly, thank you to Andrew Griffiths for his time and efforts as Chairman over the last ten years, I'm pleased Andrew will be continuing as Chief Observer for the Group. Thanks additionally goes to the Committee for their time and effort especially over the last two years, which have not been straightforward for anyone.

Being Chair really didn't get going for me until the first committee in January due to a number of factors! So, as I start as the new Chair of the Group, I would like to reach out to Members of the Group for some support; we are looking for people to be Committee Assistants (basically helpers!) in the following areas.

Events-

Anyone who is interested in helping with running/organising a single event and/or multiple events or just contributing some time to the Group - please make yourself know to us, two people came forward at the AGM!

Communication-

We are looking for someone or several people to assist/run/update the following:

The Group Website

A Group Instagram account

The Group Facebook page

A Group Twitter account

And a Newsletter editor

It may be a chance to try something new or bring your skills to the Group, either way we would welcome hearing from you.

If you would like to assist but are not sure, please email me on chairman@wessexam.uk or call me on 07866552797.

As regards my driving I'm facing the first 1,000mile week in over two years with various trips (both work and pleasure) in the Southwest and South

Wales, all in my newish Hyundai Tuscon Ultimate Hybrid 230bhp, the list of driving aids it sports is amazing and makes driving a pleasure. It's the first car I've had with no gear stick, just buttons to select the Drive mode.



I was lucky to visit Mercedes World earlier in January and grabbed a spur of the moment slot to have a drive in a Mercedes C63 AMG with some 510 hp to hand. No limit angles to think about, just apexing the corners and trying to keep

the wheels from spinning up. The power was amazing as were the brakes thankfully! Then a spin or two on the skid pan, with a one and three quarter lap power slide to finish off!



Additionally, I've been out and about in my BMW Z3, after a few repairs and MOT advisories sorted out in December, I've enjoyed some open top motoring in the last few weeks.

Editorial

As explained in the winter 2021 edition, until a new editor is found that will be the last newsletter. However, to keep things going in the meantime, I am resurrecting the bulletins; a cut down newsheet to keep you informed and make another plea for someone to come forward and compile the various contributions into one document.

From the Chief Observer

Hello all and welcome to my Chief Observer's corner. I hope you are all well and staying warm in these seemingly arctic temperatures we have been experiencing!

It's been a challenging two years for everyone and for many, it has meant less driving due to lockdown restrictions and other factors outside our Group's control.

However, our Group is gradually returning to observed drives albeit with caution; there are still "nasties" out there we have to manage and be careful about, particularly here in Somerset where infection rates remain high. We are advised by Government experts to maintain social distancing and good ventilation; in the confines of a car this is not easy! Nevertheless, we have been progressing to resume on-the-road training for our Associates who have been waiting very patiently and we are now ready to begin.

Over the last two years of pandemic, we have lost a number of our Observers for a variety of reasons and sadly we are now left with just FOUR... to train 14 Associates. We will be contacting Associates on a prioritised basis.

When you are contacted by our Associate Coordinator, Pauline, I urge you to make every effort to be available to begin and to commit to scheduled drives otherwise you will be moved down the prioritised list. We have to do it this way in order to make progress in reducing the backlog in a timely manner.

In the meantime, please spend some time reviewing the PowerPoint presentations given at the 3 classroom sessions (available on our website <http://training.wessexam.uk>). Also keep read your course Handbook as this could all reduce the amount of on-road training required and help us get through the backlog.

If you have any questions, please either contact Pauline (coordinator@wessexam.uk) or me (chiefobserver@wessexam.uk)

Best regards,

Andrew

Associate Co-ordinator Report

I'm pleased to report that our group has now resumed observed drives.

While the number of Associates on our waiting list has increased over the last two years unfortunately our Observer number has dwindled. So our group currently has fourteen Associates and four active Observers. Where possible each Observer is now working with two Associates to enable all Associates to get on the road as quickly as possible.

If you have any questions, please contact me - I am always happy to discuss any concerns you may have.

Pauline

Hello Again!

By Serena Lonton, returning committee member and Events Co-ordinator!

Well, here I am again! After joining Taunton Group of Advanced Motorists in 1993 and passing my advanced test in September the same year, then joining the committee a year later, taking on Membership Secretary, Group Secretary, then leaving in 2013 (I think!), I'M BACK!

As we all know, our group started as a sub-group of Exeter Group, becoming TGAM (Taunton Group of Advanced Motorists) in our own right in 1981, then later WAM (Wessex Advanced Motorists), incorporating Camelot (formerly Yeovil Group), and now further afield into North Devon. How things have changed!

Well, I hope I can do justice to my new role, after all I have a very hard act to follow in the shape of Barry Keenan, who has done a wonderful job as Events Co-ordinator over many years. Goodness knows I will need all the help I can get, but I know Barry set up a list of volunteers who I will definitely be calling on as and when needed.

I must also acknowledge the huge contribution to WAM by Andrew Griffiths, who retired as Chairman at our AGM in November. Andrew stepped into the breach 9 years earlier when we were without a Chairman and has been an absolute rock ever since, as well as National Observer, working tirelessly for WAM and IAM.

I must also pay tribute to a former Group Secretary, Laurie Forde, who sadly passed away in the Summer of 2020. He was my predecessor as Secretary and had a sense of humour beyond belief! Our committee meetings were hilarious! Such wonderful times.

Anyway, onward and upward. Let's hope Covid-19 will become a thing of the past and allow us to continue our aim to make our roads safer for all.

A is for...

In road driving terms you might think that A mainly stands for Anticipation. But it might also be for Acceleration as in acceleration sense or, Automatic or Autonomous or even, ABS or Airbag. Or, it could be for A-Roads, Aquaplaning or possibly Arm Signals or, Awareness. In fact, here it is none of these but, something far more basic whilst simultaneously being core in terms of being safe on the roads. I first came across the principle of accountability in a book by the highly respected and successful American business entrepreneur and philanthropist, Rich De Vos, who, with his business partner, built a massive global sales and distribution business and was also a highly respected and popular public speaker. DeVos wrote that so much of our behaviour is determined by our sense of accountability or, lack of it. I have long seen that principle as applying equally well in driving because having drivers feel accountable for their behaviour, or likely behaviour, has to be a strong basis for changing attitudes and, therefore, actions and, therefore also, is intrinsically linked with safety on the roads. On that basis it seems pertinent to examine at least some of the factors which may influence our sense of accountability and linked behaviour in road driving.

Of the various things which may affect our sense of accountability, chief amongst those obviously has to be legal. I was once on a Crown Court jury. The resultant effect on me was the extent to which society is kept in place by possible accountability in the face of the law. But perhaps potentially even more effective is a feeling of consequence in a social or community environment. One evening my wife arrived home in tears. She had just been stopped by the police. It seems that at the time if you kept correctly to speed limits, particularly in a BUA, that was sufficiently unusual to draw their attention. There was no crime; she was merely asked to present respective papers at the police station within 48 hrs which was before the digital age. But here she was, in a very upset state, merely on the basis that she had been stopped by the police with an implied social embarrassment if that got around the community.

Portugal has an excellent way of bringing people to order via embarrassment. If a driver exceeds a speed limit further down the road he or she is stopped by a red light, obviously causing all the traffic behind to stop as well. Everyone knows what has happened and uses their horn accordingly. Result? Apparently, no one in Portugal exceeds speed limits and all done without the need for police action or prosecution. Excellent. On a wider basis the 74 human faced gargoyles around the outer buildings of

the Cathedral of St James in the Croatian city of Šibenik are supposed to represent those who would not contribute to the building of the Cathedral. Consequences in perpetuity! How neat.

Extending that theme reminds me of a local shop which posted pictures of individuals who were not welcome and I think some police forces may also have used this tactic in relation to known offenders. In some areas drivers are being encouraged to submit dash-cam evidence which can be used in Court. Once the news gets around an area this obviously can generate a sense of accountability because you never know who is watching cum recording your actions. One could say that in days of yore the stocks & pillory performed a similar service; the possibility of being subjected to public ridicule with the added indignity of having bad eggs and tomatoes thrown at you could obviously be a good deterrent. Being publicly identifiable or, the possibility of, therefore makes most people more accountable for their behaviour and, as such, gives an excellent message all round. Can you imagine the difference it would make if everyone had to have their telephone number writ large on the sides of their vehicles? The answer is obviously it would make a massive difference and probably a quantum change in road safety at the same time. In driving terms, the reverse of accountability is anonymity and manufacturers have, perhaps unwittingly, contributed rather well to this.

Nowadays humans are more or less encompassed by the vehicle. It's part of an attempt by manufacturers, together with airbags potentially emerging from every orifice, to protect the vulnerable occupants from the very dangerous world outside. In their highly competitive world manufacturers also do all they can to make using their product as pleasant as possible. They limit the sound entering the passenger compartment and will design the suspension so that you have as smooth a ride as possible. In fact, more than that, together with the sound proofing there are the higher sill lines, larger A frames, which also increase the obstruction to view, and generally less glass area, meaning much is done to effectively isolate the passenger compartment from the world around. Add in some darkened glass for good measure and a good job has been done of insulating the occupants from the reality outside and their sense of connectivity with what is going on around them. From research done at the Psychology Department of Nottingham University¹ it was shown that the quietness and smoothness in modern vehicles can significantly change the perception of speed, meaning that drivers can often be going faster than they think they are. That research also found that the more so-called safety gizmos which are added to vehicles the more drivers tend to rely on them, disengaging the brain

proportionately, effectively making them more vulnerable to crashes than they might otherwise be. But, also, relying on gizmos can cause drivers to feel less responsible for adverse occurrences which might be connected with them. The less connected with the world around a driver might feel the greater the potential for anonymity and, therefore, the less accountable for their actions they might feel. It was the former F1 World Champion Graham Hill who said if you want to make the roads safer make every vehicle topless and, of course, you would prohibit wearing dark glasses! Since accountability goes hand in hand with being identifiable it means that there is a direct relationship between anonymity and accountability.

The feeling of accountability, therefore, has to be a pivotal aspect of what determines behaviour in road driving. We've gone through legal, social and personal and the latter, particularly in relation to one's family should be the highest on the list. However, there is also a scale of accountability; the legal, often based on the risk of being caught which can, in some areas, be very low, or even non-existent. The community or social which can be effective so long as one is in a local area and the personal, including that for the family or any passengers who may be carried. And it's the latter which potentially has the greatest and most consistent durability, particularly in the case of the family.

In road driving the sense of accountability can also be directly related to the sense of *vulnerability*². In 2002 the Dutch introduced a policy of no traffic lights and removing some road markings³, instantly making drivers feel more vulnerable. Not only did they slow down but, the crash rate reduced dramatically as well. I am not suggesting a universal policy in the UK of no traffic lights or road markings. The example merely illustrates that the more vulnerable drivers, or road users, feel the more aware they become of what is going on around them and the more care they take, reducing crashes accordingly. Vulnerability is, therefore, related to *risk profile* which, in turn is inter-connected with *threat perception*, all factors which have been covered in previous articles. When the threat perception goes up the risk profile goes down and vice versa. This means that if it is possible to have someone recognise – and accept – that this or that aspect of their driving creates a vulnerability, in other words makes them more crash vulnerable, then it is only a short step to say, 'What if your family was in the vehicle as well if an avoidable crash happened? Bearing in mind that probably 98% of crashes are avoidable with the right attention and mindset and remembering that whole families have been wiped out in a single crash. I have long said that in spite of all the technical analysis of crashes which takes place, and even nowadays businesses with such super impressive titles as, 'Forensic

Collision Investigation and Reconstruction Ltd' – I mean who could not fail to be impressed with that –, apart from mechanical malfunction 99.9% will be related to being inattentive or stupid, or both. That is easily proven by the fact that the more training, from the right sources, which takes place and the more that training is adhered to then the vulnerability for crashes reduces in direct proportion. At the highest level of competence there is never an excuse for having a crash, bar just one totally unavoidable and extremely rare type of occurrence where you are faced with opposing traffic having gone wide of the exit of their left-hand bend and is head-on to you as you approach that same bend as a right hander. Additionally, the opposing vehicle would normally have got into an uncontrollable skid. That experience happened to a RoADA Examiner who I knew personally and, as we discussed the situation afterwards, it was clear that impact was totally unavoidable. Luckily, he was not injured.

Additionally, and most importantly, an increased sense of accountability would also mean taking ownership of safety. And once we get to the point where drivers personally take ownership of their own safety, we will be well on the way to changing their behaviour with an important improvement in their family's safety as well, for example. That would then be a very major step forward in generally improving safety on the roads.

¹ From a BBC Radio 4 programme, 'All in the Mind', when fronted by Dr Antony Claire.

² See the article 'V is For', by the author

³ <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2002/jun/30/uk.transport#:~:text=A%20Dutch%20experiment%20to%20scrap,empty%20roads%20and%20fewer%20crashes%20.&text=I%20a%20complete%20switch%20from,own%20devices%20can%20be%20ideal>

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January 2022

The Highway Code: 8 changes you need to know

Rules for all types of road users have been updated in The Highway Code to improve the safety of people walking, cycling and riding horses.

The changes follow a [public consultation on a review of The Highway Code to improve road safety for people walking, cycling and riding horses](#). It ran from July to October 2020, and received more than 20,000 responses from the public, businesses and other organisations. Most people who responded were in favour of all the changes.

The changes were made to The Highway Code on Saturday 29 January 2022.

Here are 8 of the changes that you need to know about.

1. Hierarchy of road users



The introduction section of The Highway Code has been updated to include 3 new rules about the new 'hierarchy of road users'.

The hierarchy places those road users most at risk in the event of a collision at the top of the hierarchy. It does not remove the need for everyone to behave responsibly.

It's important that all road users:

- are aware of The Highway Code
- are considerate to other road users
- understand their responsibility for the safety of others

The 3 new rules are numbered H1, H2, and H3.

Read the new rules

- [Rule H1 \(Introduction\)](#)
- [Rule H2 \(Introduction\)](#)
- [Rule H3 \(Introduction\)](#)

2. People crossing the road at junctions



The updated code clarifies that:

- when people are crossing or waiting to cross at a junction, other traffic should give way
- if people have started crossing and traffic wants to turn into the road, the people crossing have priority and the traffic should give way
- people driving, riding a motorcycle or cycling must give way to people on a zebra crossing and people walking and cycling on a parallel crossing

A parallel crossing is similar to a zebra crossing, but includes a cycle route alongside the black and white stripes.

Read the updated rules

- [Rule H2 \(Introduction\)](#)
- [Rule 8 \(Rules for pedestrians\)](#)
- [Rule 19 \(Rules for pedestrians\)](#)
- [Rule 170 \(Using the road\)](#)
- [Rule 195 \(Using the road\)](#)
- [Rule 206 \(Road users requiring extra care\)](#)

3. Walking, cycling or riding in shared spaces



There is new guidance in the code about routes and spaces which are shared by people walking, cycling and riding horses.

People cycling, riding a horse or driving a horse-drawn vehicle should respect the safety of people walking in these spaces, but people walking should also take care not to obstruct or endanger them.

People cycling are asked to:

- not pass people walking, riding a horse or driving a horse-drawn vehicle closely or at high speed, particularly from behind

- slow down when necessary and let people walking know they are there (for example, by ringing their bell)
- remember that people walking may be deaf, blind or partially sighted
- not pass a horse on the horse's left

Read the updated rules

- [Rule H1 \(Introduction\)](#)
- [Rule 13 \(Rules for pedestrians\)](#)
- [Rule 62 \(Rules for cyclists\)](#)
- [Rule 63 \(Rules for cyclists\)](#)

4. Positioning in the road when cycling



There is updated guidance for people cycling about positioning themselves which includes:

- riding in the centre of their lane on quiet roads, in slower-moving traffic and at the approach to junctions or road narrowings
- keeping at least 0.5 metres (just over 1.5 feet) away from the kerb edge (and further where it is safer) when riding on busy roads with vehicles moving faster than them

People cycling in groups

The updated code explains that people cycling in groups:

- should be considerate of the needs of other road users when riding in groups
- can ride 2 abreast - and it can be safer to do so, particularly in larger groups or when accompanying children or less experienced riders

People cycling are asked to be aware of people driving behind them and allow them to overtake (for example, by moving into single file or stopping) when it's safe to do so.

People cycling passing parked vehicles

The updated code explains that people cycling should:

- take care when passing parked vehicles, leaving enough room (a door's width or 1 metre) to avoid being hit if a car door is opened
- watch out for people walking into their path

Read the updated rules

- [Rule 67 \(Rules for cyclists\)](#)
- [Rule 213 \(Road users requiring extra care\)](#)

5. Overtaking when driving or cycling



You may cross a double-white line if necessary (provided the road is clear) to overtake someone cycling or riding a horse if they are travelling at 10 mph or less (Rule 129).

There is updated guidance on safe passing distances and speeds for people driving or riding a motorcycle when overtaking vulnerable road users, including:

- leaving at least 1.5 metres (5 feet) when overtaking people cycling at speeds of up to 30mph, and giving them more space when overtaking at higher speeds
- passing people riding horses or driving horse-drawn vehicles at speeds under 10 mph and allowing at least 2 metres (6.5 feet) of space
- allowing at least 2 metres (6.5 feet) of space and keeping to a low speed when passing people walking in the road (for example, where there's no pavement)

Wait behind them and do not overtake if it's unsafe or not possible to meet these clearances.

People cycling passing slower-moving or stationary traffic

The updated code confirms that people cycling may pass slower-moving or stationary traffic on their right or left.

They should proceed with caution as people driving may not be able to see them. This is particularly important:

- on the approach to junctions
- when deciding whether it is safe to pass lorries or other large vehicles

Read the updated rules

- [Rule 67 \(Rules for cyclists\)](#)
- [Rule 76 \(Rules for cyclists\)](#)
- [Rule 163 \(Using the road\)](#)
- [Rule 212 \(Road users requiring extra care\)](#)
- [Rule 215 \(Road users requiring extra care\)](#)

6. People cycling at junctions



The code has been updated to clarify that when turning into or out of a side road, people cycling should give way to people walking who are crossing or waiting to cross.

There is new advice about new special cycle facilities at some junctions.

Some junctions now include small cycle traffic lights at eye-level height, which may allow cyclists to move separately from or before other traffic. People cycling are encouraged to use these facilities where they make their journey safer and easier.

There is also new guidance for people cycling at junctions with no separate facilities.

The code recommends that people cycling should proceed as if they were driving a vehicle where there are no separate cyclist facilities. This includes positioning themselves in the centre of their chosen lane, where they feel able to do this safely. This is to:

- make them as visible as possible
- avoid being overtaken where this would be dangerous

People cycling turning right

The code now includes advice for people cycling using junctions where signs and markings tell them to turn right in 2 stages. These are:

- stage 1 - when the traffic lights turn green, go straight ahead to the location marked by a cycle symbol and turn arrow on the road, and then stop and wait
- stage 2 - when the traffic lights on the far side of the junction (now facing the people cycling) turn green, complete the manoeuvre

People cycling have priority when going straight ahead at junctions

The code clarifies that when people cycling are going straight ahead at a junction, they have priority over traffic waiting to turn into or out of a side road, unless road signs or markings indicate otherwise.

People cycling are asked to watch out for people driving intending to turn across their path, as people driving ahead may not be able to see them.

Read the updated rules

- [Rule H2 \(Introduction\)](#)
- [Rule H3 \(Introduction\)](#)
- [Rule 73 \(Rules for cyclists\)](#)
- [Rule 74 \(Rules for cyclists\)](#)
- [Rule 75 \(Rules for cyclists\)](#)
- [Rule 76 \(Rules for cyclists\)](#)
- [Rule 167 \(Using the road\)](#)
- [Rule 170 \(Using the road\)](#)
- [Rule 211 \(Road users requiring extra care\)](#)

7. People cycling, riding a horse and driving horse-drawn vehicles on roundabouts



The code has been updated to clarify that people driving or riding a motorcycle should give priority to people cycling on roundabouts. The new guidance will say people driving and or riding a motorcycle should:

- not attempt to overtake people cycling within that person's lane
- allow people cycling to move across their path as they travel around the roundabout

The code already explained that people cycling, riding a horse and driving a horse-drawn vehicle may stay in the left-hand lane of a roundabout when they intend to continue across or around the roundabout.

Guidance has been added to explain that people driving should take extra care when entering a roundabout to make sure they do not cut across people cycling, riding a horse or driving a horse-drawn vehicle who are continuing around the roundabout in the left-hand lane.

Read the updated rules

- [Rule 79 \(Rules for cyclists\)](#)
- [Rule 167 \(Using the road\)](#)
- [Rule 186 \(Using the road\)](#)

8. Parking, charging and leaving vehicles



The code recommends a new technique when leaving vehicles. It's sometimes called the 'Dutch Reach'.

Where people driving or passengers in a vehicle are able to do so, they should open the door using their hand on the opposite side to the door they are opening. For example, using their left hand to open a door on their right-hand side.

This will make them turn their head to look over their shoulder behind them. They're then less likely to cause injury to:

- people cycling or riding a motorcycle passing on the road
- people on the pavement

Using an electric vehicle charge point

For the first time, the code includes guidance about using electric vehicle charging points.

When using one, people should:

- park close to the charge point and avoid creating a trip hazard for people walking from trailing cables
- display a warning sign if you can
- return charging cables and connectors neatly to minimise the danger to other people and avoid creating an obstacle for other road users

Read the updated rule

- [Rule 239 \(Waiting and parking\)](#)

Find out about all the changes

In total, 10 sections of The Highway Code have been updated, with 50 rules being added or updated.

You can find a summary of all the changes in [The Highway Code updates list](#) on GOV.UK.

Stay up to date

The Highway Code is essential reading for everyone. It's updated regularly, so it's important that everyone reads it - not just learner drivers.

Many of the rules in the code are legal requirements, and if you disobey these rules you're committing a criminal offence.

If you do not follow the other rules in the code, it can be used in evidence in court proceedings to establish liability.

The full updated version of [The Highway Code](#) is available, free of charge, on GOV.UK.

You can [pre-order an updated version of The Highway Code book](#) online now, and buy a copy at most high street bookshops from April 2022. It has a new cover design so it's easy to recognise.

The Right BPM When Driving is Critical

For a long time now, we have been aware that the music we listen to whilst driving can affect our actual behaviour behind the wheel. It may be a little late by the time you read this so far as your Christmas travel is concerned but relevant for future listening when considering its impact on one's choice relating driving to beats per minute (bpm). Brunel University London, Coventry University and the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), working with Direct Line Motor Insurance can reveal the festive songs that can have the best and worst effects on a motorist's mental state when driving home for Christmas – and the ones that are better suited.

However, the research shows that Chris Rea's 'Driving Home for Christmas', at 90 bpm, may be too low to suitably stimulate motorists on monotonous motorway trips. This will not be music to the ears of millions of motorists, as it has been voted the third most popular Christmas song with 28 per cent of Britons citing it as one of their favourites – just behind The Pogues' drunken ballad 'Fairytale of New York' (34 per cent) and Maria Carey's 'All I Want for Christmas Is You' (28 per cent).

Brunel's research reveals that in stressful driving environments, such as urban roads that demand a higher amount of perceptual and processing work from the brain, it is best to listen to slower music. This is because the mental load imposed by the driving environment is quite high and so fast, stimulative music can lead to overload. Therefore, Christmas classics such as 'Stop the Cavalry' by Jona Lewie, 'Santa Baby' by Eartha Kitt or 'White Christmas' by Bing Crosby – all of which have a slower tempo, would be ideal for city driving.

On longer journeys, there are fewer external factors that elevate the mental load of driving, which can lead to mild mental fatigue and boredom. Accordingly, songs in a moderate-to-fast tempo range (of between 100 bpm and 130 bpm) are optimal. 'Do They Know It's Christmas?' By Band Aid, 'Jingle Bell Rock' by Bobby Helms and 'Merry Christmas Everybody' by Slade are all ideal tunes to add to a playlist. However, it's 'Last Christmas' by Wham! that is rated as the best song for long drives thanks to its moderate tempo of 108 bpm, catchy lyrics and 'happy' harmonic structure.

Professor Costas Karageorghis of Brunel University said

"Our research suggests that mild mental stimulation through music can be beneficial on long motorway drives with several popular Christmas songs providing just that. What drivers should look out for when populating their



festive road-trip playlists are positive lyrics, a tempo range of 100–130 bpm, low-to-moderate levels of syncopation and engaging instrumentation. It is also advisable not to play the music too loudly, so that you are still able to hold a conversation with passengers in the vehicle and hear the music as well as the surrounding traffic. We'd advise keeping the fast/loud music for the family get-togethers, rather than using it for driving at this festive time of year."

Christmas classics that Direct Line identified as having a potentially negative impact on long drives are 'Stay Another Day' by East 17 and 'Have Yourself A Merry Little Christmas' by Frank Sinatra, which at 64 bpm and 68 bpm respectively may have a 'snooze factor' about them, with drivers at risk of soporific effects on their driving. 'Sleigh Ride' by The Ronettes, poses an opposing problem, as at 182 bpm it has a tempo that may induce speeding – as well as five key changes, which give a feeling of more and more energy to the driver.

These findings are important, as further research from Direct Line found that 46 per cent of those driving to visit friends or family over Christmas – some 11.1 million people – say that they always listen to Christmas music, with 76 per cent of this group stating that they always sing along with festive cheer.

Safe And Unsafe Loads

It is estimated that unsafe loads on vehicles injure more than 1,200 people a year, cost businesses millions of pounds in damaged goods and inconvenience hundreds of road users with disrupted journeys.

While most HGV fleet operators know the importance of load security along with the regulations and the penalties for cutting corners, it is not widely known that the same rules on load safety apply to all vehicles.

It is an offence to use a vehicle or trailer on a road if it involves a danger of injury to any person. This includes any situations where the weight, position, or distribution of a load, or how it is secured, involves this danger. The offence can be committed not only by the driver but by anyone who causes or permits this – which may be the business and the penalty now is an unlimited fine.



Driving for Better Business is therefore calling on trade groups to follow the lead of the British Aggregates Association (BAA) in raising awareness of safe and secure loading amongst their members.

Nina Day from the Health & Safety Executive who has specialisms in dangerous good safety and workplace transport issues says "The most common problems are inadequate – or a total lack of – risk assessment and worn out or wrong load securing kit. Tippers and open-topped trucks are the vehicles most likely to have insecure loads. Often, the main cargo is stowed securely, then loose equipment such as tools, thrown in afterwards. She points out that loads must be secured from moving not only forward and backwards and side to side, but also upwards and highlights two fatal incidents caused by loose items bouncing out of vehicles. Potholes, speed humps and uneven road surfaces can also cause loads to shift, affecting the vehicle's braking and steering and making it more likely to turn over. Light commercial vehicles are also more likely to be overloaded or insecure – often down to the driver failing to understand the vehicle rating.

With thanks to the UK Safety Network