

## **BUSINESS FEATURE**

### **MANAGING ROAD RISK - A BUSINESS CRITICAL ISSUE**

The new Corporate Manslaughter Act, which comes into force on 6<sup>th</sup> April 2008, will make it much easier for HSE to prosecute employers successfully in relation to colleagues' safety whilst driving at work.

The spotlight is firmly on employers' 'duty of care' to ensure that drivers have been properly risk-assessed and that there are policies in place to promote road safety throughout their business.

Company directors are legally responsible for the safety of their employees and for the consequences of accidents that involve the wider public.

And the penalties for non-compliance will get the boardroom listening as companies will incur large fines (£250,000+); or directors even imprisonment. The road is essentially an extension of the workplace.

Directors are also responsible through what is known as the "modes of involvement" where they are likely to collect points on their own driving licenses for the convictions of their employees (if their convictions relate to driving for the business).

To protect the employers the Health and Safety Executive advises that the first step is to undertake a full risk assessment of 'at work' drivers and ensure all are appropriately licensed.

Dr Gerhard Manogg, Director of Imagitech, one of the UK's leading providers of driver education software explains the need for a road safety audit as a crucial element in protecting companies from prosecution and provides an essential guide in ensuring you have covered all the bases.

"The introduction of the new Act reinforces the fact that employers must promote and safeguard their employees on the road as well as in the workplace. Many companies have still not conducted a recent road safety audit which leaves them wide open to the risk of prosecution - either by the courts or by civil claims from victims of accidents involving workplace vehicles.

"The process of getting your house in order is not a complex one and it is as relevant for large companies as small. With the introduction of the new Act, occupational road risk is again highlighted as a business critical issue."

Dr Gerhard Manogg who, together with his colleagues, has devised the Roadmarque® road safety audit system emphasises that an effective risk assessment does not need to be complicated or costly but that it needs to ascertain the level of risk that individual employees pose to themselves, the organisation as well as the other road users.

Such a risk assessment needs to include a DVLA license check to ensure that drivers are legally entitled to drive the vehicle that they drive at work, and an overall assessment about the driver profile, history and vehicle used. In short:

1. Ensure all your drivers have a valid driving license to drive on behalf of the company through a full DVLA license check
2. Check whether their license entitles them to drive the vehicle they are using for work
3. Take into account the age, gender, road mileage and collision history
4. Monitor the road mileage undertaken by employees
5. Include the vehicle that is being used
6. Look at the number of hours being driven on the average working day - and what time of day the driving is being carried out
7. Understand how individuals feel towards the amount of driving they do at work

Following these key points for each driver will enable the company to carry out cost effective training and policies can be introduced to reduce the risk in a targeted way.

Regular risk assessments are one crucial step in managing the 'at work' road risk; but additional measures are necessary - such as the introduction of a driving at work policy, communicating this to the employees in an effective way and arranging targeted training to reduce the risk of individual drivers.

The benefits of improving your fleet safety and promoting and supporting safer drivers are numerous and go far beyond legal compliance:

- Better management of the risk employees and the organisation are exposed to in relation to at work driving
- Reduced fleet running costs due to better driving standards
- Cost reductions from less collisions
- Reduced insurance premiums
- Improved staff morale
- Enhanced corporate reputation
- Reduced pollution through better driving standards

The introduction of effective risk management steps to reduce road risk should therefore work out as a cost neutral or cost saving exercise.

## **FACTS AND FIGURES: Occupational road safety**

- Around one third of approximately 3,200 fatal casualties occurring annually on Britain's roads are work related
- On average 3 people are killed every day whilst driving at work
- It is estimated that between 25% and 33% of road traffic collisions involve somebody driving through work
- There are still 1 in 500 at-work drivers who are driving whilst disqualified and 1 million drivers in the UK have nine or more points on their licence
- 100,000 drivers lost their licences for drink driving last year

**ENDS**