



Risk Factors by Road Type – Managers

Introduction

For many of us, driving for work is the single most dangerous task that we perform on a daily basis. It is estimated that more than a quarter of all road traffic incidents may involve somebody who is driving as part of their work at the time.

The Issues

In the UK, different road types present different risk factors so it's an important to risk assess each environment so sufficient control measures can be put in place. If your drivers are required to use motorways, rural roads or urban roads when driving on Company business, it is important that they understand and are able to manage the risks.

Identification

We suggest that you conduct analysis on the road types used for your business operations. Examine the trip frequencies of your drivers to further understand the risk exposures along with incidents and near miss incidents that have been reported. Understanding the root causes of incidents is a crucial element of the analysis. Examining road type, time of day, location, driver age and experience can give you an opportunity to review and improve your existing control measures.

Next Steps

Consider developing a driving safety campaign to raise awareness of driving risks and to refresh the knowledge of your drivers. We have provided some additional safety tips within this driving safety briefing that you can communicate within your organisation.

Risk by Road Type - Urban

Statistically, most collisions (bent metal incidents) such as rear end shunts and slow speed manoeuvring incidents occur in built up urban environments such as towns and cities. It is estimated that **75%** of road traffic collisions and **44%** of road traffic fatalities happen in urban environments.

Urban areas are heavily populated with pedestrians and cyclists that share the roads with drivers, many of which are driving for work. High risk locations such as traffic light junctions often have deposits such as rubber from tyres, brake dust and diesel spillage on the road surface which create additional skid risks (especially when wet).

These factors, coupled with poorly maintained vehicles, inexperienced road users and heavy vehicle, pedestrian and cyclist activity, all contribute to the collision rates in the urban environment.

In the UK, investment has been made to make towns and cities safer by introducing traffic calming measures such as mandatory 20mph zones, speed ramps, designated cycle lanes and pedestrianised areas. However, the main contributor that would improve road safety is improving road user behaviour and decision making.



Figure 1: Urban Road Type

Risk by Road Type – Rural

Although most road traffic collisions occur in towns and cities, more road users are killed on rural roads in the countryside. It is estimated that **51%** of road traffic fatalities and **21%** of road traffic collisions occur on rural roads. Often these fatalities occur in the early hours of the morning in remote locations making it difficult for the emergency services to be alerted and then attend the scene in time to save lives.

Rural roads have higher speed limits than urban roads but:

- Are not as well maintained
- Lack good road surfaces
- Lack traffic calming measures

Rural roads have sharp deviations (or bends) which place additional cornering forces on vehicles that may already be travelling too fast rendering them unstable and likely to run off the road at high speeds. These factors, coupled with poorly lit roads, driving whilst tired and errors of judgement all contribute to the collision rates in the rural environment.

These risks are amplified for people that are driving for work due to the other risk factors that we have already covered earlier in this training course. Managers and supervisors that plan work for drivers should conduct suitable and sufficient risk assessments and build in control measures to reduce road risk as far as reasonably practicable in all driving environments, urban, motorway and rural.



Figure 2: Rural Road Type

Risk by Road Type – Motorway

Motorways are statistically the safest roads to drive on. It is estimated that just **4%** of road traffic collisions and **5%** of road traffic fatalities occur on motorways. However, in a serious collision, there may be multiple vehicles involved, each travelling at high speeds. One of the biggest risk factors affecting people driving for work is tiredness and loss of concentration which can lead to falling asleep at the wheel. This would result in a catastrophic, although infrequent collision.

Motorways are generally well maintained in the UK with good road surfacing and adequate lighting making driving at night time easier than on some rural roads. Motorways are designed to be generally straight with slight bends, extending the drivers vision into the distance. Additionally, the traffic on each side is heading in the same direction eliminating head on collisions.

Although motorways are the safest roads, they still have risk increasing factors. On long journeys, motorway driving can be monotonous which can lead driver distractions such as engaging in telephone conversations and/or being tempted to pick up a hand-held device and look at the screen.

- **A lack of concentration, even for a couple of seconds at high speeds can have devastating effects in a crash situation**

These risk factors are increased for people that are driving for work as they are coupled with the pressures of meeting deadlines or long distances to cover after the working day. A rule of thumb is to have at least a 15-minute break at a service station every 100 miles or 2 hours of driving, whichever comes first. Consider developing safety guidelines for driving in all environments and adding them to your driving for work guidance.

Figure 3: Motorway Road Type



For clarification or further information please contact:

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