

“As I was giving ‘last minute’ instructions to my sales executive on their car phone, a minor collision occurred, causing a long delay. The client got fed up waiting and we lost a very big contract!”

The law treats vehicles as places of work and items of work equipment, and employers have a duty to protect employees who travel as part of their work. Around a third of all accidents on the road involve people at work. Travelling at work can include:

- internal transport
- journeys to and from the workplace
- business trips during work time
- overseas travel.

Hazards associated with overseas travel include:

- political unrest
- endemic diseases
- unfamiliar laws and customs
- natural disasters
- climate extremes
- dangerous or poisonous animals, snakes and so on.

Your work-related travel and road risks should be the subject of specific risk assessments, which should aim to:

- identify driving or travelling-related hazards
- assess which of the hazards give rise to significant risks
- develop control measures to protect the driver, traveller, public and vehicle.

Tips

Introduce the Highway Code to the workplace. This may involve:

- driver training, authorisation and licensing
- fitness-to-drive medicals
- one-way systems
- speed limits
- installing mirrors and pedestrian crossings
- keeping vehicles and pedestrians apart
- installing reversing alarms on vehicles
- carrying out visibility checks and regular preventive vehicle maintenance.

Introduce a good vehicle selection policy, for example purchase vehicles with good safety features, such as rollover protection; collision protection; ergonomically designed instrument layouts; seats offering good lumbar support; quiet vehicles.

Develop safe driver programmes, including:

- driver selection and training
- defensive driving; vehicle familiarisation
- forward planning of routes and journey patterns
- an “Is my journey really necessary?” philosophy (using alternatives such as videoconferencing)
- safe driving procedures – realistic journey times, rest breaks; drivers’ licence monitoring; no eating, drinking, reading, phoning or smoking at the wheel; no blame culture for vehicle or road accident reporting/investigations; “How’s my driving?” reporting schemes; good driver awards; and drivers’ handbook.
- Make sure that all your vehicles are serviced and maintained in accordance with manufacturers’ guidance.
- Provide information packs for employees who drive or travel overseas.

Useful links

Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents

www.rospa.com

Institute of Advanced Motorists

www.iam.org.uk

IOSH free publication “Safety without borders: keeping your staff healthy and safe abroad”

www.iosh.co.uk/idoc.ashx?docid=e5039217-3a07-46c7-bf43-63114a67e1a3&version=-1

Health and Safety Executive – Workplace transport

www.hse.gov.uk/workplacetransport/index.htm