



Driving is the most dangerous work activity that most people do. Research indicates that about 20 people are killed and 250 seriously injured every week in crashes involving someone who was driving, riding or otherwise using the road for work purposes.

HSE Guidelines, 'Driving at Work', state that 'health and safety law applies to on-the-road work activities as to all work activities and the risks should be effectively managed within a health and safety system.' Therefore, employers must assess the risks involved in their staff's use of the road for work and put in place all 'reasonably practicable' measures to manage those risks.

This section gives simple advice on how employers and managers can help to ensure that the organization's road journeys are properly planned and safely completed. This applies to all at-work drivers (e.g. managers driving to meetings) and not just professional LGV and PCV drivers.

#### **What employers should do?**

##### **Prevent Driver Sleepiness**

One of the most important things employers must do is ensure that their drivers are not at risk of falling asleep at the wheel. Tired drivers cause thousands of crashes. They are most likely to happen:

- On long journeys on monotonous roads, such as motorways.
- Between 2am and 6am.
- Between 2pm and 4pm (especially after eating, or consuming even one alcoholic drink).
- After having less sleep than normal.
- After drinking alcohol.
- If taking medicines that cause drowsiness.
- On journeys home after night shifts.

##### **Raise Awareness**

As part of recruitment, training and staff appraisal, ensure all drivers and managers are reminded about:

- The danger of falling asleep at the wheel.
- The need to get adequate sleep before starting to drive.
- The dangers of 'moonlighting' or spending too long on evening hobbies, social activities or domestic work that limit sleeping time.
- The times of day when sleepiness is most common.
- The early signs of fatigue and what to do if they begin to feel tired during a journey.
- The risks of making a lengthy home journey after a day's work away from their normal base.

##### **Reduce Distances**

Set in-house limits on maximum driving distances per day, per week, per month and per year. When requiring employees to drive to and from a location to carry out a work task, set reasonable maximum mileages which drivers should not be expected to exceed in a single day. Support this with clear policies that allow staff to take overnight stops, or ensure the driving can be shared.

##### **Control Drivers' Hours**

Set in-house limits for unbroken driving hours, including daily, weekly and monthly limits for all classes of drivers. As a working rule, no driver should be required to drive continuously for more than 2 hours without at least a 15-minute break. The drivers' hours rules for professional drivers are the statutory maximum. Breaks and break locations should be planned for in advance of starting journeys.

##### **Use Safer Alternatives**

Where possible, use remote communications such as telephone, e-mail or video-conferencing as a substitute for road journeys or travel by plane or train, which is far safer. If road travel is unavoidable, maximize car sharing to reduce the number of journeys.

##### **Optimize Schedules**

Ensure that journey scheduling allows sufficient time for drivers to take account of reasonably foreseeable weather and traffic conditions and to comply with speed limits. Schedules should seek to reduce night driving and avoid those times of day mentioned previously when falling asleep at the wheel is more likely. Payment by customer contact or 'job and finish' regimes must not encourage drivers to disregard road traffic law or the organization's own driving rules, standards and policies.

##### **Permit Overnight Stays**

Where employees have to travel a long distance to a work location at the beginning of the day or the journey is likely to take more than two hours, consider asking staff to travel the night before and stay overnight. Similarly, at the end of a work period at a remote location, employers should make provision for employees to stay overnight so that they do not have to drive a long distance home when tired.

##### **Review Shift Arrangements**

Night shifts and rotating shifts cause severe sleeping disruptions. Workers on 12-hour shifts (compared to eight hours) are significantly sleepier at the end of their shift, especially at 7am. Review shift arrangements to see that these do not lead employees to drive while fatigued. Where problems are identified, including increased risk during commuting, consider providing safer, alternative transport.

##### **Promote Safe Driving**

Develop policies, advice and training for line managers and drivers on:

- Safe speeds – To ensure speed limit compliance and that personal performance schedules do not encourage speeding.
- Distraction – Don't expect drivers to make or take phone calls, send messages or transact business whilst driving. Stipulate that these activities must only be done when parked.
- Impairment – Have policies on drink and drug driving (including prescription and over-the-counter medicines), and on medical fitness to drive (eyesight, illness).
- Vehicle checks – Before each journey to make sure everything's working properly, especially tyres, lights, windscreen wipers and all fluid levels.
- Journey planning – Give staff written advice or time to plan their journey.
- Incident procedures – What to do and whom to contact in the event of an incident/emergency. Staff who travel alone or for long distances should have access to a mobile phone, but be advised on its safe use.

##### **Avoid Driving in Adverse Conditions**

Actively discourage driving at night and in adverse weather conditions, particularly fog, very high winds, ice, snow or flooding or where there is a danger of drivers becoming stranded in remote locations.

##### **Specify 'Safer' Routes**

Every journey should be a managed journey. Require those responsible for journey planning (line managers or drivers themselves) to take account of road type (accident rates are lowest for example on motorways and dual carriageways); hazards (road works, accident 'black spots'); traffic densities (time journeys to avoid peak traffic hours); and high-risk features such as schools or busy shopping centers.