Minimising Vehicle Reversing

This information sheet aims to provide some guidance in relation to the reversing of cars and other small vehicles.

The HSE estimated that nearly 25% of all deaths involving vehicles at work occur while vehicles are reversing. The 25% figure comes from scrutiny of HSE inspectors' accident investigation reports, and includes approximately 10- 20 deaths per annum. Vehicle direction is not always recorded, and the HSE does not investigate all vehicle accidents as many involving vehicles on public roads will often not be reported to it – so the numbers of deaths are likely an underestimate.

What is certain is that there are a number of actions that can be taken to minimise the need to reverse a vehicle. The HSE suggest a range of options, some of these are well within the ability of the driver to manage whilst others require some consideration by the management team and property designers.

Elimination

First and foremost drivers should drive in a manner that eliminates the need to reverse, this could be by using one way systems, driving through a parking bay into another parking bay to allow for a forward exit, organising routes in order to minimise the need for reversing.

Make sure visitors to your workplace are aware of the alternative ways out so there is no need to use reversing manoeuvres to turn a vehicle round and head for an exit etc.

Reducing the Risk

In locations where reversing cannot be avoided then it may be that:

- 'Reversing zones' will be provided. These will be clearly marked and must be used by all vehicles as directed by local signage. These zones take all reasonable steps to eliminate the presence of pedestrians and other hazards in order to allow safer reversing;
- Some areas may only allow reversing under the supervision of a trained signaller (a reversing assistant), their job is to keep the area behind a reversing vehicle free of pedestrians and to help guide drivers. Where large vehicles operate reversing assistants are often not allowed due to the difficulty that drivers may have in seeing them;

- If you are driving in an area where a signaller/reversing assistant works the you should know the agreed system of signalling and be able to see them at all times (directly or via a mirror);
- If you lose sight of the signallers then you should know to stop immediately until you re-establish your sight line.

When reversing without support then extreme care should be taken, speeds should be low and if you cannot find anyone to help guide you back then you should attempt to use reflections from surrounding structures to check the area that is out of you line of sight. Physically check the area behind your vehicle before reversing and if you lose sight of any pedestrians stop and check the area again.

Designers and managers are asked to minimise the likelihood of reversing incidents occurring by:

- Looking at better site layouts to increase visibility for drivers and pedestrians;
- Reducing the dangers caused by 'blind-spots';
- Fitting reversing alarms;
- Using reversing cameras;
- Using other safety devices such as "'sensing" and "trip" systems to either warn the driver or stop the vehicle when an obstruction is detected close to, or comes in contact with, the reversing vehicle.

Legislation requires organisations to do what it can to separate pedestrians and vehicles (e.g. use marked walkways and barriers to prevent people walking into traffic).

Common Reversing Situation

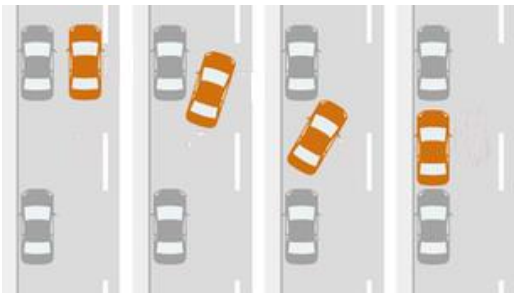
For those that are driving cars and other smaller vehicles the most common reversing situation that a driver will become involved in is linked to parking of the vehicle. This is either parallel parking or parking in a bay that is perpendicular to the flow of traffic.

Parallel Parking

There are many techniques associated with parallel parking and you should use the techniques you have been taught to achieve a safe reverse. It is important at all stages of the reverse that you look for pedestrians, drive slowly and using reversing assistants as required by any safe system of work or where someone is readily available to help ensure pedestrians stay out of the reversing zone.

Having commenced the process of parallel parking by starting to reverse backwards (parallel to what will be the front vehicle/obstruction) then 4 stages summarise the approach that most techniques reflect:

1. **Turn Left** when the two boots are in line or level;
2. **Turn Right** when you see a 45 degree angle in your door mirror (your vehicle in relation to the kerb);



3. Reverse straight back for a short time until the kerb disappears in your left door mirror. Now T**urn Right** again;
4. The front end of the car will begin to swing in, once it looks parallel or directly behind the car in front of you then straighten the wheels, so **turn Left** to finish.

Before you start the reverse it is critical that there is 360 degree observation. When reversing backwards, look over the left shoulder and mainly glance ahead for updates for approaching cars and remember to look over your right shoulder at least twice- more if necessary. A good time to check your right shoulder is on both occasions you turn the steering wheel to the right.

Bay Parking

Many people will choose to drive into a parking bay, however this leaves you with an awkward and potentially more dangerous reversing operation when leaving. Reversing into the space provides you with several advantages.

The first of these is that it is safer to reverse into somewhere you can see. As you drive past a space you are able to look into the space and determine if it is free of obstructions, in a parking garage for example it is unlikely that anybody will enter that space although in an open area you will always want to keep an eye out for those that may enter the area – good use of your mirrors should allow you to keep constant watch on the area.

If you reverse out a space then you are attempting to move into an area you are unable to see fully (i.e. the flow of moving traffic). Good use of mirrors in this situation will never provide an appreciation of the traffic coming from either side and there is always the option for pedestrians to appear. Don't start the manoeuvre if you're likely to endanger other road users.

From a security point of view, reversing close to an object such as a wall can make it more difficult for thieves to access your boot. If you need to exit a parking space quickly for personal security reasons, driving out provides you with better acceleration and improved vision.

Note – These are only broad reflections of the techniques promoted by many driving organisations, the text is not intended to replace existing training but simply serve as a reminder.

Further Training

If you feel you would benefit from further training around the topic of reversing, then you can contact any driving school for further advice or contact the Driving Trainer/Assessor at Transport Services.

Other Resources

IS11 - Occupational Road Risk
IS23 - Ergonomic Driving
IS48 - Occupational Road Risk – Head Restraints
IS69 - Safe use of Mobile Phones (or
AS32 - Driving at Work
HSF46 - Occupational Road Risk Assessment
Online Training (via CONNECT)
Practical Training (Transport Services)

similar)