

Occupational Road Risk

In general, risk is the likelihood that harm will be realised. When relating this to occupational driving, this indicates the chances of being injured whilst driving a vehicle on behalf of an employer. Under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, employers are required to undertake risk assessments on all work activities. Where significant risks are identified, employers must ensure adequate control measures are in place to reduce the risk to a level that is as low as is reasonably practicable. Where an employee is asked to drive any vehicle to benefit an employer, then a risk assessment is required.

Car and van drivers who cover 25, 000 miles a year as part of their job are almost at the same risk of being killed at work as those working in mining and quarrying, indeed DoT statistics show occupational driving to be a relatively high risk activity.

Occupation	Annual Average probability of occupational fatality
Deep Sea Fishing	1 in 750
Coal Mining	1 in 7,100
Car Driving (25,000 miles p.a.)	1 in 8,000
Construction	1 in 10,000
Agriculture	1 in 13,500
Service Industries	1 in 150,000

Who is at Risk?

Many employers and employees are unsure as to who is affected by occupational road risk and indeed often form the opinion that it does not apply to them. In fact, where an employee is being asked to drive a vehicle, whether that vehicle is owned by the employer, a third party or the employee, and it is under the instruction of, or is driving to benefit the employer, then there will be a duty on the employer to undertake risk assessments and to introduce measures to reduce the risks to employees.

In practice those at risk include employees who work as delivery drivers, chauffeurs, employees using employers vehicles and the casual driver using their own car to deliver or collect items. Whilst the risks vary with frequency, no matter how often an employee drives on behalf of the employer, risk reduction techniques must always be considered.

What are the Risk Factors?

The principal factors to consider fall under three headings:

The Journey, The Vehicle, The Driver

The headings can be expanded and would include consideration of the following:

The Journey: Road types, distance to be covered, reasonable time allocation, allowance for sufficient breaks, poor weather conditions, driving at night/ darkness.

The Vehicle: Maintenance to a suitable standard, crash resistance, other safety features (air bags etc), driver familiarity with vehicle, loads being carried, distractions (mobile phones etc).

The Driver: Age, experience, driving competence, associated skills (loading, checks etc), health and fitness, stress and fatigue, attitude, accident history.

How can the Risks be Controlled?

There is a preferred "hierarchy of control"; that is to say the order in which risk reduction should be attempted. This can be summarised as follows:

1. Eliminate Journeys altogether

Or change to a safer mode eg train, plane or combination.

2. Planning the safest journey

Avoid driving in adverse conditions, reducing distances and drivers hours; specify "safest routes" eg avoid accident blackspots.

3. Specifying appropriate vehicles

Make sure the vehicle being used is appropriate for the task and that there is an effective maintenance schedule for the vehicle.

4. Using appropriate drivers

Ensure driver fitness, develop clear policies on alcohol/drugs, put in place driver assessment and improvement programmes.

5. Other supportive measures

Emergency planning, personal safety, incentives, awards etc.

What has to be done?

Employers must undertake risk assessments and introduce control measures that will reduce the risk to a level that is as low as reasonably practicable. In turn employees must co-operate with the employer, read the risk assessment findings and ensure that they follow all instruction relating to the control of risks.

North Lanarkshire Council

Before you drive any vehicle on behalf of the Council you need to be aware of the findings of the risk assessment for your driving activity. A risk assessment form exists to facilitate this and your line manager will talk through the arrangements for the risk assessment and the ways in which you may be able to minimise the risk to your health and safety further.

You also need to remember that you have a duty to act in a manner that does not put yourself or others at risk and so you must drive within the confines of the law and as road conditions permit.

It is expected that all those driving vehicles owned by the Council will have attended a competence assessment session with Transport Services. North Lanarkshire Council makes use of a pool car system and whilst use of this system is the default position for car drivers there may be occasions where other vehicles will be needed to enable loads to be carried safely (this needs to feature in the risk assessment process). It is recommended that those that drive their own vehicles on behalf of the Council also participate in Council led training (practical and/or online).

If in doubt about any risks or control measures then ask!

Other Resources

IS23 - Ergonomic Driving

IS48 - Occupational Road Risk –
Head Restraints

IS69 - Safe use of Mobile Phones (or
similar)

IS80 - Minimising Vehicle Reversing

AS32 - Driving at Work

HSF46 - Occupational Road Risk
Assessment

Online Training (via CONNECT)

Practical Training (Transport Services)

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