



IAM
FIFTY YEARS OF
DRIVING ROAD SAFETY

Borders Observer

www.bordersiam.org.uk

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Borders Group hits the target



Under instruction



Robin Hood's merry crew

For our first summer social event of the year, we convened at the Eastcote Archery Centre, near Denholm, on a Wednesday evening in July.

As we arrived it was clear there was a problem - the centre had suffered a power cut and there was no lighting. As the staff struggled to get the generator going, we were given some basic safety instruction.

Once we were *au fait* with the procedures we were given some demonstrations before it was our turn.

We were coached very well by the staff and after a few goes, we were ready for the main event - the competition.

Of course, this was all meant to be fun, but some participants seemed to be taking it very seriously and it soon became clear that there was a needle match developing between Robin 'Hood' McKendrick and your intrepid editor, 'Friar Tuck' Hamilton.

At the end of the evening, scores were added up and in a surprise upset, 'Friar Tuck' triumphed over the more experienced 'Hood'.

Prizes were awarded for the Best Lady Archer (Maid Marion McKendrick), Best Junior Archer (Duncan Sandison, aged 12) and of course Best Archer (Friar Tuck Hamilton).

Thanks to Charlie Dodds for organising the night and to the staff at Eastcote for such an enjoyable evening

See their website at: www.eastcote-archery.co.uk.

Kevin Hamilton

Events Programme

Tuesday 7 November 2006 - Lothian & Borders Safety Camera Partnership

7.30pm Rm A17, Heriot Watt, Netherdale, Galashiels

Colin MacNeil will give an overview on the workings of the Partnership including new developments such as the use of a motorbike for camera enforcement. This is your chance to hear about the cameras and ask questions.

Tuesday 5 December 2006 - Borders Procurator Fiscal

7.30pm Rm A17, Heriot Watt, Netherdale, Galashiels

What a Borders Fiscal gets up to... - Graham Fraser, District Procurator Fiscal, Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service will give a talk on his work.

Tuesday 6 February 2007 - Edinburgh Headway Group

7.30pm Rm A17, Heriot Watt, Netherdale, Galashiels

Edinburgh Headway Group is a Scottish Charity dedicated to helping and supporting the traumatically head injured, their families and carers. Maxine Kinnaird will give a talk on the history and work of the group.



Sandy Brownlie, who passed his car test earlier in the year receives his certificate from membership secretary, Bob McKendrick.

Congratulations !

To the following members who recently passed their Advanced Test:

**Donald MacLeod
Maude Brownlie**

Welcome !

To the following new members of the Borders Group:

**Stuart Graham
David Fairburn
Barry Sutton
Eddie Robertson**

Bill Gets GOLD

Our Secretary, Bill Allison, who recently joined the ranks of our Observers, has not only passed the RoSPA Advanced Driving Test, but achieved the pass at "Gold", the highest award open to a civilian driver in the UK, and possibly in the world. Our congratulations go to Bill, who has not only spent considerable time preparing for the test, but will also have to undergo a retest every three years time in order to maintain his RoSPA membership!

Contributions

I hope you enjoy the latest edition of Borders Observer. It takes quite a bit of effort to pull it all together and I do rely on contributions from members. As usual, if you have any comments or suggestions, please contact me on **01506 412386** or e-mail: iam@kevham.co.uk.

The copy deadline for the next issue is Friday 15 December 2006.

Kevin Hamilton

Chairman's Welcome

Welcome to another edition of our Borders Observer Newsletter.

This year is a special one for me, as I have reached 25 years as an IAM member. Where have those years gone? I can still recall some of the on road guidance that I received in preparation of undertaking the IAM driving test.

At times I thought, will I ever master this but over a period of time and further reading Roadcraft and Highway Code, I presented myself for test one Saturday morning. If my memory serves me well my examiner was Insp. Wilson of Lothian and Borders Traffic Department. One slight mishap sticks in my mind from that day. As I was exiting the car park to join the road system I stalled the engine. I thought that's it I've failed before I have even begun.

I can't recall much about the rest of the drive but we arrived back approximately one hour later and to my relief was told that I had passed. What I remember from the debrief was a comment that I should have used the horn at least once on the drive.

Having been a member of the IAM and the local Group over the past 25 years has certainly had a profound influence on my life. I have had the opportunity to meet some important names in the motoring world. It has also opened doors and windows of opportunity that I would never have experienced had I not joined and remained a member. The social side has been fantastic over the years having made many friends along the way.

The motoring scene is a different world today to what it was back then. Vehicle technology and road engineering as well as better driver education have moved forward. What is different today that is very noticeable, many drivers have a bad attitude to driving and I don't know if there is an answer to this problem? There are too many examples that I could highlight regarding this matter but I am sure you can all see this everytime you take to the roads yourself. Individuals need to take a look at themselves and question their actions more when driving.

What the next 25 years holds for me regarding my driving career I don't know, but I will continue to drive to the best of my ability and preserve my clean licence to date.

*Raymond Black
Chairman*

Associate Course

Three new "Associate" members, David Fairburn, Stuart Graham and Eddie Robertson, attended our last one-day training course on Saturday 23rd September in the Boardroom of BSW Timber, Earlston. The Observers delivering the course on what turned out to be a beautiful day were Peter Sandison and Bill Allison, the latter fresh from his achievement in gaining top grade in the RoSPA Advanced Driving Test. The participants seemed to enjoy and benefit from the day, judging by their active participation and positive feedback. We look forward to their transformation into "Full" members in the near future! If you have a friend or family member who might enjoy and benefit from taking their driving to a higher plane, please tell them about our Group and the course!

Mystery Treasure Hunt

August saw the return of the Borders Group Mystery Treasure hunt.

Teams gathered at the Abbey car park in Kelso and were given the clue sheet and route which had been devised by Raymond Black.

There was some concern that one team had the help of a GPS satellite navigation system but after assurances that this would not be used, we all set off.

The clues ranged from very easy to dastardly difficult and took participants on a tour of famous Borders attractions including Scott's View.

One team (the winners as it turned out) somehow managed

to take a wrong turn and arrived back at Kelso in the dark.

On return to Kelso, the sheets were handed in to score-keeper Mary Davison and then adjudicator, Raymond Black announced the winning team (driven by Bill Allison).

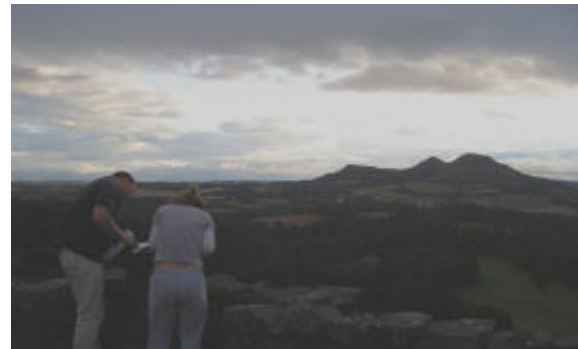
It was a close call, though and some of the other teams were a bit miffed to have lost (some folk are just so competitive!)

Thanks are due to Raymond for organising the event and to Mary for handing out the sheets and totting up the scores.

Kevin Hamilton



The winning team deciphers a clue



Looking for information at Scott's View

IAM Website Update

For its 50th anniversary year, the IAM has taken the opportunity to redesign its website, and review how it communicates with membership and the many groups and organisations with whom it engages.

The new site has enhanced interactivity, and it is hoped that it will develop into a meeting place where visitors can share their passion for driving or riding, and have a say on current road user and safety issues. The aim is to encourage a dialogue between the IAM and everyone interested in its wide-ranging work.

Increasingly, the site will also reflect a new emphasis on helping Members and Associates get more from their driving and riding – and more from their relationship with the IAM.

Visit the new site at: www.iam.org.uk

The screenshot shows the IAM website interface. At the top left is the IAM 50 logo with the tagline 'DRIVING ROAD SAFETY'. Below it is a search bar and navigation links for 'Home', 'About Us', 'e-Shop', 'Members', 'Groups', 'Latest News', 'IAM Fleet', 'Fish Advanced Motorists', and 'Links'. A 'Print this page' section is also visible. The main content area features a 'Welcome to the IAM!' message, a 'Join the IAM' section with a 'Skill for Life' car image and a 'Join online' button, and a 'Latest News' section with articles like 'Drivers With "Joined Up Thinking" Do Better' and 'Emergency Vehicles'. At the bottom, there are advertisements for 'DriveCheck' (How good are you?) and 'IAM fleet Commercial training', along with a 'View Finder' link.

Highway Code Quiz

This month, we have a selection of multiple choice questions based on your knowledge of the Highway Code. There is no prize this month but answers will appear in the next issue.

Of course, all of the answers are available in the Highway Code which is available online at: www.highwaycode.gov.uk.

1. Highway Code, Paragraph 83. Alcohol and the road user.

Drinking alcohol seriously affects driving ability. Which of the following is incorrect?

- (a) Gives a false sense of confidence.
- (b) Affect judgement of speed, distance and risk.
- (c) Speeds up your reactions.

2. Which of the following is correct according to paragraph 88 of the Highway Code which relates to traffic signs?

- (a) Make sure you know, understand and act on all traffic and information signs and road markings.
- (b) Act only on the Highway Code signs you know.
- (c) Act on Highway Code signs only if necessary.

3. Highway Code, Paragraph 85 gives certain advice regarding signals having completed a manoeuvre. Is it?

- (a) Look in the mirror to ensure signals were understood.
- (b) Acknowledge courtesy extended to you by other road users.
- (c) Cancel them after use.

4. Highway Code, Paragraph 135. Before moving off, the Highway Code suggests certain safety procedures. Which of the following is included?

- (a) Ensure that the handbrake is on.
- (b) Ensure that all doors are closed.
- (c) Look round for a final check.

5. Highway Code, Paragraph 137 refers to when you should use your mirrors. Does it say?

(a) Use your mirrors frequently so you always know what is behind you and to each side of you.

(b) Use your mirrors after a manoeuvre, to confirm to have completed it safely.

(c) Use your mirrors only when you are travelling in a straight line.

6. Highway Code, Paragraph 137 advises a course of action before you carry out a manoeuvre or change speed. Which of the following is correct?

- (a) Brakes, gears, accelerator.
- (b) Signal, course, brakes.
- (c) Mirrors, signal, manoeuvre.

7. Highway Code, Paragraph 136 says in relation to cycles and motorcycles?

- (a) These are more difficult to see than larger vehicles.
- (b) Two wheelers should always display lights.
- (c) Riders of two wheelers should always wear reflective clothing.

8. Highway Code, Paragraph 103. A general rule to denote a 30 mph speed limit on all roads other than motorways is?

- (a) 30 mph signs placed at 200 yard intervals with a system of street lighting.
- (b) Where there is no street lighting.
- (c) Usually where there are streetlights, unless signs show otherwise.

9. Highway Code, Paragraph 105 advises on following distances. How many seconds does it say may be sufficient when travelling behind a vehicle on the open road in good conditions?

- (a) 2 seconds
- (b) 3 seconds
- (c) 4 seconds

10. Highway Code, Paragraph 202. What guidelines are given in respect of wet weather driving?

- (1) Stopping distances will be at least doubled those required for stopping on dry roads.
- (2) Keep well back from the vehicle in front.
- (3) Ease off the accelerator and slow down using light braking if the steering becomes unresponsive.

Is the combination:-

- (a) 1 & 2
- (b) 1 & 3
- (c) 2 & 3

11. According to Highway Code, Paragraph 105 what is the overall stopping distance of a car from 60 mph?

- (a) 240ft - 73mtrs - 18 car lengths
- (b) 60ft - 20mtrs - 5 car lengths
- (c) 260ft - 80mtrs- 20 car lengths

12. According to Highway Code, Paragraph 105 what is the thinking distance at a speed of 50 mph?

- (a) 53mtrs - 175ft
- (b) 37mtrs - 125ft
- (c) 15mtrs - 50ft

13. Highway Code, Paragraph 105. On a dry road with good brakes and tyres, the shortest stopping distance for a vehicle travelling at 70mph is?

- (a) 325ft - 99mtrs - 26 car lengths
- (b) 315ft - 96mtrs - 24 car lengths
- (c) 240ft - 73mtrs - 18 car

June Quiz Answers

The winner of the February quiz was Morag Sterrick (again) who got the most correct answers - well done.

The answers were: 1. Motorway Ends 2. No pedal cycles 3. Pedal Cycles Only 4. Uncontrolled Level Crossing 5. Risk of Grounding 6. End of dual carriageway 7. Wild animals. 8. Ahead only 4. Loose Chippings

Drivers with “joined up thinking” do better

Britain's 30 million drivers may have many clocked up many years' experience at the wheel between them, but that is no guarantee that they will get better at the actual driving task. In some cases they may actually get measurably worse over time, according to new research from Brunel University.

Brunel say that drivers coached beyond the L-test are more aware of what is going on around them. This greater awareness is not restricted to just other road users, road conditions, and infrastructure, but the "joining up" of these elements into an overall understanding of their meaning in terms of potential hazards and the appropriate driver response.

Professor Neville Stanton of Brunel's Ergonomics Research Group said: "This was the first scientifically controlled study into the effectiveness of advanced driver coaching by the IAM (Institute of Ad-

vanced Motorists). We are satisfied that coaching, plus practical on-road assessments and feedback, leads to better drivers. The IAM group were significantly better drivers by the end of the two-year study than either of the control groups, who remained the same or got worse."

Researchers divided up three groups, each with 25 drivers, matched by gender (seven women and 18 men), age (from 22 to 65, with an average age of 44), annual mileage (typically 13,000 miles per annum), driving experience (an average of 23 years) and points on licence. Together they were "observed" for more than 650 hours at the wheel.

The group that was coached by "observers" showed measurable improvements in all three areas of driver competence: knowledge of what was going on around them, skills applied to the driving tasks, and attitude towards driving.

IAM Chief Examiner Peter Roger, said: "Just because you have had a few more years on the road, it doesn't mean that your attitude to driving is any more healthy. We know that by working on the skills of drivers, they cannot help but start to re-evaluate their ability to spot hazards early and this leads to safer driving. Advanced drivers are also less prone to the frustrations that lead to road rage."

The IAM commissioned Prof Stanton, Dr Guy Walker, Dr Tara Kazi and Dr Mark Young to carry out the research. The team concluded that nearly 70% of drivers who received advanced coaching showed significantly safer skills in a number of key areas, including speed, safe distances, cornering, gear changing, seating position, and use of mirrors, according to the scientific comparison of normal and advanced drivers.

Source: IAM Press Office

Are you “an accident waiting to happen”?

More than a quarter of motorists (26 per cent) are “an accident waiting to happen” because they drive too close to the vehicle in front on motorways, according to a new nationwide survey of 22,105 vehicles released by leading motoring bodies at the start of National Motorway Month (NMM).

The worst offenders in the survey were on the M4 in Wales, where over 50 per cent of drivers were too close to the vehicle in front. The next worst were Midlands motorists on the M42, where 39 per cent were too close, and the M9 in Scotland, at 26 per cent.

The best motorway behaviour was found on the M5, where just 1 in 12 drivers were tailgating, followed by the M20 and the M2.

Researchers from the IAM (Institute of Advanced Motorists) surveyed a sample of UK motorways on two successive Wednesdays in June and July, before feeding data to the RAC Foundation for analysis.

The RAC Foundation, IAM, the Freight Transport Association and BSM Driving Schools jointly promote National Motorway Month.

Together NMM campaigners have highlighted tailgating as the number one driver error on the UK's motorway network, and are calling on drivers to remember the “two second rule”. Highways Agency (HA) research into safe driving found that tailgating

contributed 29 per cent of all injury accidents on the network. The Highway Code says that you should allow at least a two second gap between you and the vehicle in front on roads carrying fast traffic. But this latest survey shows that this is alien to many motorway users. If the weather is poor, the ‘two second rule’ needs to be doubled.

Motorways are the safest roads in the UK but with there are still more than 8,000 drivers killed or seriously injured (KSI) on the network each year. More than 42 per cent of crashes occur within 1 km of a junction.



HA chiefs are of the opinion that tailgating – or “close following” – is a major contributor to crashes and are currently researching the problem with a view to improving safety and tackling poor driver behaviour.

In 2004, National Motorway Month highlighted the success of chevrons in reducing tailgating. NMM campaigners have this

week welcomed the news that the Highways Agency is introducing new white chevrons on the M1 between junctions 26 and 27, together with signs to advise drivers to “keep two chevrons apart.” This will result in a total of nine network locations with chevrons.

NMM members would also like to see more frequent reminders via the roadside Variable Message Signal (VMS) boards which could also make a difference to driver behaviour.

IAM Chief Examiner Peter Rodger said: “It's obvious that too many drivers simply forget their speed, regardless of the conditions on the motorway or what is in the lane ahead of them. They then follow other vehicles as if they were traveling much more slowly. So they are ignoring the two second rule – designed to help you leave enough space between you and the vehicle in front so you can pull up safely if it suddenly slows down or stops.

“Regardless of what indicators are available on the motorway, every driver should make it standard practice to leave a good gap, adjusting their following distance regularly to take into account weather and traffic conditions,” said Mr Rodger, who was an examiner at the Metropolitan Police Driving School before taking up his role as the IAM Chief Examiner earlier this year.

Source: IAM Press Office

Eyes Right

There is a special section in the police accident report called "waiting to turn right" which, although it is an everyday manoeuvre, produces more than its fair share of smashes.

By definition, while you are waiting to turn right, your vehicle is preparing to move across oncoming traffic. You have to judge the speed and distance of the vehicles coming across you, bearing in mind fast moving motor-bikes, and slower road users such as cyclists. Getting that judgement right is one of the hardest things any driver ever does.

As well as that, while you are waiting there, vehicles may well be moving down your inside – or possibly queuing behind you, also waiting for you to complete the turn.

Either way, it's a good idea to think about your steering as you sit there waiting for the suitable gap to cross. Keep your front wheels pointing straight ahead until the time comes to actually drive across the road. Resist the temptation to turn the wheels to the right in readiness – or to just hold the car on the foot brake.

That way if you are hit from behind, perhaps by one of those vehicles filtering past, the impact is less likely to send you into the oncoming traffic (which could turn a minor shunt into a major crash).

Not only is it safer to complete the steering manoeuvre in one go, you will also avoid "dry steering" – which is when you twist the tyres round when they are not rolling. That wears tyres and strains the steering.

Source: IAM Press Office

Ease off the anchors

Gentle, planned braking is something that all drivers should aspire to.

And if you don't think so, imagine being a passenger with somebody at the wheel who is doing nothing except "emergency stops". That kind of white knuckle ride may be extreme - but we all see examples daily of people who habitually leave it too late to brake for some reason (why else would there be all those skid marks on the tarmac?).

The key to good braking is anticipation. Don't rely on the brakes to get you out of trouble because you failed to plan for the hazard ahead in good time.

A good way to develop sensitive braking is to imagine that you want to bring the car to a stop without your passengers noticing.

By increasing pressure on the pedal smoothly you will "brush off" most of the speed - so at the right moment you will be able to bring your foot off the brake pedal without leaving the brakes biting to the bitter end. This is possible with a bit of practice: ease up on the brake pedal imperceptibly just as you are about to stop – the last metre or so. This allows you to roll gently to a stand-still without the vehicle's nose dipping or a jerk.

Braking should be a single, sustained use of the pedal - with the maximum pressure applied during the middle phase.

This gentle approach gives a good indication to the person following you that you are slowing down. That in turn gives them more time to react and so reduces the chances of an inattentive driver "rear ending" your car.

As an indicator brake lights are a bit crude: when you think about it, all the other indicators are telling other road users what you intend to do but the brake lights just confirm that you are already doing it!

Source: IAM Press Office

Smooth Gears

One of the hallmarks of an advanced driver is a smooth style with manual gear changes.

A car's gearbox is a wonderful piece of engineering, rarely causing problems during the expected lifetime of fifteen years, withstanding hundreds of thousands of shifts up and down the ratios. It's so well developed that all you need to do is gently guide where it wants to go.

Yet "snatching" at gears is common, causing an abrupt and a less than comfortable ride for passengers. Another problem is drivers who hold the gear stick constantly, refusing to let go, in order that they can make the gear changes as quickly as possible. That hand would be more use on the steering wheel.

To make the gear change smoother, let the gearshift pause for a second or two as it crosses the "central gate" or neutral zone. This alone will make your gear changes smoother – there's no need to rush them.

Secondly, guide the gear lever with the palm of the hand semi-open with the thumb sticking out. Guide the gear lever away from you for 1st to 2nd. The thumb should be pointing down. Now guide the lever towards you for 2nd to 3rd, 3rd to 4th and 4th to 5th (or even 5th to 6th). Now the thumb is pointing upwards.

For block changing (when you "skip" intermediate gears) keep the thumb down for 4th to 2nd.

And remember, around town, you can often stay in third gear and respond to new hazards early by easing off the throttle. Adjusting your speed with a fine throttle has all sorts of advantages.

As a check to see how smooth your gear changes are, take a glance at your front seat passenger's head. Are they constantly "nodding"? If so you need to make your gear changing smoother and less hurried. Your passengers (and transmission system!) will appreciate it.

What is the IAM?

The Institute of Advanced Motorists (the IAM) is a charitable body with 3 very simple aims and objectives -

1. To improve the standard of driving and riding on the UK's roads.
2. The advancement of road safety.
3. The administration of an Advanced Test.

The Advanced Driving Test has been in existence since 1956 (and the Advanced Riding Test for motorcyclists since 1976). Due to the existence of around 200 local IAM Affiliated Groups throughout the UK, all charitable organisations in their own right, the support for people wanting to prepare for and pass the IAM's Advanced Test is unparalleled throughout the UK. The support of the Groups means that the Advanced Test is available and probably achievable for ANYBODY who has an interest in improving their driving skills.

By "improving their driving skills" we are not talking about

those who want to enter motor-sport but anybody who feels the way that drivers are left to their own devices once they have passed their "L" test is not good enough, or even that the nature of driving has changed since they passed their "L" Test, especially in

today's unforgiving traffic and roads.

The 'Test'

The Advanced Driving Test lasts for about 90 minutes and usually covers between 30 and 40 miles along all types of road.

The Examiner will hold a Police Advanced Driving certificate (either serving or ex Police Class 1) and will have extensive experience from working within the Traffic sections of the Police Force.

The Test gives a thorough workout of driving ability, allowing the candidate to alter their drive according to the conditions and environment of the road. The types of road vary from quiet country roads, motorways to busy town centres. In each case there are hazards

and situations that need to be avoided and taken care of using the methods and techniques that advanced driving gives. There may be situations where the candidate can show flair and panache (or what we term as Sparkle) on an open country road where optimum progress can be gained at maximum safety, using optimum road positioning and excellent observation. All this combines to give a brisk smooth drive, at the legal limit on the open road. In other situations, the candidate will

need to show restraint and composure to deal with tricky hazards that may become apparent throughout the drive. Such as in a town centre situation, where observation is used to pick out hazards in situations that are constantly changing. The main objective is that the candidate has to perform well in all situations rather than excel in one.

Many people often comment on the Test after taking it and more often than not, the comments revolve around how much they enjoyed the drive. On Test the candidate gets to "show off" the new skills that they have been tuning for the weeks during their course. The Advanced Driving Test **IS NOT EASY** but is within the reach of most motorists with the right guidance.

How do I join?

Visit the IAM website at <http://www.iam.org.uk/Skill4Life/> and gain a 'Skill for Life'.

Alternatively, contact any of the Borders Group committee who will be pleased to tell you more about Advanced Driving.



New Child Seat Regulations

New regulations governing the use of child car seat-same into force on 18 September 2006.

The changes update regulations dating from 1993 when many more cars on the road than now did not have rear seat belts. The old rules are generally to use child seats and boosters "if they are available". The vast majority of cars now have rear seat belts, so parents can now benefit by always using child seats and boosters.

The new regulations mean that you must not carry a child without a booster seat if they are less than 135cms tall. As with all these regulations, it is the driver who is responsible for them. So the defence "my child thinks booster seats aren't cool" is unlikely to succeed. There is a £30 penalty for not following the regulations.

Adult seat belts are best for people over 150 cms (approx 5') in height and with an adult bone structure. Children need to use child seats and boosters to be

safe - the boosters put the young passenger in the right position to benefit from the adult seat belt properly.

Even if your own child is more than 135cms tall, there are things to think about if you ever find yourself giving lifts to other children, on school runs for example: the regulations will still apply.

If you think you will be giving a young passenger a lift, and they are less than 135cms, why not check if their parents have a suitable booster seat they can lend you? A child psychologist has argued that children are more likely to accept "their" seat rather than somebody else's.

When you fit the booster seat, ensure it is properly secure, that the child is comfortable and that the seat belt is properly adjusted. And it is a good discipline to ensure that all passenger belts are secured before you start the engine, regardless of how old your passengers are

Emergency Vehicles

Deciding on what to do when you hear an emergency vehicle approaching can be a dilemma. Do you stay where you are and potentially block the progress of an emergency vehicle? Or do you move into a position that may put you or other road users at risk?



Unfortunately, some drivers overreact to emergency service vehicles travelling on "blues and twos" (blue lights and two-tone horns). This is often because they don't hear or see the emergency vehicle until it is very close, and then take drastic action to get out of the way.

Don't panic and just brake. It's natural to want to react. But instinctively putting your brakes on immediately in front of an emergency vehicle doesn't help: it slows the progress of the emergency vehicle and jeopardises other road users.

Think about where you are on the road. You should deal with the problem in the same way that you deal with any other potentially hazardous driving situation. Observe and plan: what is the safest option available to you? You must sacrifice everything for safety, but never sacrifice safety for anything else – not even facilitating the progress of the emergency service vehicle.

Don't cross red traffic lights or speed to get out of the way. The emergency driver has training and

legal exemptions that you don't have. Bus lanes and box junctions can be problems too, but let them resolve the law – not you.

If you are moving it may well be that you can continue at a reasonable pace and the emergency vehicle can follow you out of a pocket of congestion (such as a blocked one way system). In that scenario, attempting to pull over too soon, or slow down, might just cause a needless obstruction and so hamper the progress of the emergency vehicle.

Indicate your intentions clearly. Don't pull in opposite other obstructions, such as centre bollards. If you are thinking about pulling over across a junction or outside a school or factory, you may be unwittingly preventing the emergency vehicle reaching its destination. And do think about where you are asking the emergency driver to overtake you – on the brow of a hill or a blind bend can be placing him or her in a very difficult position.

Get out of the way as soon as you can do so in safety.

Source:: IAM Driving Tips

Screen Test

There's no doubt that modern cars are structurally far superior to models widely available in years gone by. But one of the recent trends in structural safety has had a possible downside in terms of driver vision – the growth of the A pillar.

The A pillar is the engineering term for that area dividing the windscreen and the windows. In recent years the A pillars have become sturdier, in a bid to improve the structure of the car as a whole. Put simply they have had to get stronger.

In response, car designers have made them thicker. But that A pillar has created a blind spot which campaigners have pointed out goes undetected by thousands of drivers. This became apparent recently when Autoglass commissioned MIRA to look at the problem.

Some models have a lack of visibility of up to 4.5m.

Manufacturers are aware of the issue; they are responding by looking at alternative designs, such as transparent pillars. Paradoxically, older cars have less of a vision restriction. Apparently a popular older model has an A pillar blind spot of 1.2m – but its modern equivalent is double that.

But what should we as drivers do about the problem in the meantime?

Firstly be aware of the potential restriction in your ability to scan the road ahead. That restriction in vision from the A pillar could make all the difference at a junction. Needless to say, it is vital to check that nothing is hidden from view by the A pillar before making a manoeuvre. Pedestrians, cyclists and motorcyclists are particularly easy to "lose" in the space behind a pillar because they are narrower. Make sure you look around the pillar, and do not just take a quick "snap-shot" look which could allow a cyclist, say, to be hidden from view.

As you approach a junction, while still driving along in a straight line, look further ahead. That way you will see things through the windscreen before they become "lost" behind the pillars.

Secondly, you can find out how big a problem your A pillar is by visiting the Autoglass website: www.autoglass.co.uk/a_spot_A-spot_methodology_and_vehicles_used.asp

Remember – good, all round vision is vital. The onus is on you, as the driver, to see what is there..

Source:: IAM Driving Tips



Borders Group Website

For those of you who are 'web enabled', why not visit the Borders Group website for up-to-date information on group events and news.



The site has useful information on the workings of the group and advanced motoring in

general. There is also an archive of old newsletters and a range of useful motoring links.

The website achieve IAM Approved Quality status in 2006 - well done to Webmaster, Peter Sandison for gaining this recognition.

The site address is www.bordersiam.org.uk

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