

Measuring the risk

Fleet Safety Forum subscriber report 2012
(part 2)



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The Fleet Safety Forum is a division of the road safety charity Brake specifically for fleet managers working to manage their road risk. The Fleet Safety Forum has surveyed fleet managers who subscribe to the Forum to compare their road risk management practices.

This report publishes the second half of the results of this survey, and is preceded by a separate report on the other results (part 1).

As with part 1, this report shows many subscribers deserve congratulations for implementing measures to improve the safety of their fleets. However, it also concludes that much more can be done. This report finds there is a worryingly high proportion of organisations not doing enough to ensure their drivers are physically fit to drive.

This report publishes results relating to the following topics:

- Testing for drug and alcohol use
- Eyesight testing
- Driver tiredness and sleep apnoea

Part 1, published separately, covers:

- Young drivers
- Agency drivers
- Monitoring speed through telematics
- Use of public transport



134 organisations operating fleets of all sizes and vehicle types, and responsible for thousands of vehicles around the globe, responded to the survey.

Roz Cumming, Brake Fleet Safety Forum manager



Testing for drug and alcohol use

The effects of even small amounts of alcohol or drugs in a driver's system can be devastating, with more than half of drivers killed in the USA between 2005 and 2009 having drunk alcohol or taken drugs.¹ Drivers with just 20-50mg of alcohol in their blood are at least three times more likely to die in a crash than those with no alcohol in their blood.² Similarly not just illegal drugs, but also prescription and over the counter medication, can severely impair driving ability.³

Organisations have a responsibility to ensure their drivers aren't risking lives by driving under the influence of drink or drugs. Testing for drugs and alcohol is a good way to demonstrate to employees that the company is serious about its policy on impaired driving. Relatively few of the respondents to this survey test drivers for alcohol or drugs; this is particularly worrying given that a 2007 survey of at-work drivers by Brake found that 3% admitted to driving the morning after taking illegal drugs, and 14% of at-work drivers admitted to driving after drinking three or more units of alcohol, compared to only 6% of drivers who don't drive for work.⁴

We asked Does your company test drivers for alcohol?

More than half (57%) of Fleet Safety Forum subscribers reported they do not test drivers for alcohol.

We asked Does your company test drivers for illegal drugs?

The majority (63%) of Fleet Safety Forum subscribers reported they do not test drivers for illegal drugs.



Les Owen, senior consultant at fleet consultancy and licence checking organisation Compliance Bureau, says:



"To demonstrate appropriate corporate leadership, companies need to have: a clear policy on drug and alcohol testing; a supportive policy for those employees who report they are on prescription drugs; and a proactive approach to preventing staff from driving after drinking any amount of alcohol or taking drugs."

Advice on testing drivers for alcohol and drugs

- Have a clear and enforceable zero tolerance policy on the presence of drugs or alcohol in a driver's system, including over the counter or prescription medication that may impair driving.
- Communicate to employees clearly on the reasons why the organisation needs to carry out tests, i.e. to ensure compliance with policy, for the safety of drivers and other road users.
- Permission for the organisation to perform random alcohol and drugs testing, including how and how often, should be written into drivers' contracts. Contracts should stipulate that a detected presence of alcohol or illegal drugs will result in cessation of employment and the employee must comply with requests to test them, either randomly or for targeted reasons.
- Make employees aware that medicinal drugs can affect driving ability, and they should always check with a pharmacist or doctor whether they are safe to drive on any medicine, informing their manager if they are not. Drivers on medicine that may affect driving ability must be taken off driving duties.
- Educate new employees on company drug and alcohol policies as part of their induction and training, drawing attention to associated disciplinary procedures.

Case study Network Rail



Network Rail is a UK railway management company operating a fleet of more than 8,000 vehicles.

The company has a zero tolerance policy on drink and drug driving, with employees made aware in their induction that their contract will be terminated if they return a positive alcohol or drug test.

Network Rail stipulates employees must at no point have more than 20mg of alcohol in their blood, significantly lower than legal drink drive limits in the UK.

Drug and alcohol testing takes place at routine medicals and at random testing. A test may be carried out if an employee is involved in a collision, or if a manager suspects an employee may be under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Refusal to take a test is treated as a positive result and the employee is disciplined accordingly.

Employees are advised never to drive if they have had a drink in the previous few hours, and to inform their manager they are unable to drive if they are called in at late notice and have recently drunk alcohol.

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Eyesight testing

Having good eyesight is a basic requirement of safe driving, yet many organisations do not have policies in place for testing eyesight or promoting the importance of ensuring good vision.

It is possible to suffer vision reduction of 40% before noticing a problem; for this reason experts recommend eyesight testing at least every two years.⁵ However, many drivers do not follow this advice; every year in the UK an estimated 12.5 million people who are due an eyesight test do not have one.⁶ Companies need to take responsibility for ensuring employees who drive for work are having their eyesight tested regularly.

We asked Does your company offer eyesight testing for drivers through a company scheme?

Four in 10 companies (42%) reported they do not offer eyesight testing for drivers through a company scheme.

We asked Does your company record when drivers last had their eyes tested, either through a company scheme or privately?

More than half (56%) reported they do not record when drivers last had their eyes tested.

Advice on driver eyesight policies

- Introduce compulsory, comprehensive eyesight testing for all new employees who drive before they start work. This should be followed by compulsory testing every two years, increasing frequency to once a year for drivers over 50.
- Drivers should be told to report any change in their eyesight they notice, so they can have a full eyesight test immediately.
- In-house eyesight screening, while not an alternative to eyesight tests, can help to identify problems that arise in between tests. Employees can easily be trained to self-test using simple screeners.
- Your organisation should keep comprehensive, up to date records of employees' eyesight, and monitor any problems that are picked up.
- Employers should offer vouchers for glasses or lenses for staff who require them in order to carry out their work.
- Educate drivers on the ways eyesight can deteriorate and how this affects driving, and signs and symptoms they should look out for.

Dr Franziska Rauscher, senior researcher at the Department of Ophthalmology, Leipzig University Hospital, says:

"Companies would benefit from organising regular, specialised professional eye testing for employees who drive.

This should be tailored to the working environment of employees, incorporating a consultation on adequate correction where needed, to ensure their safety. These professional eye tests should be proactively provided by companies to assure best possible vision for each individual driver."



Case study RSA

RSA is an insurance company that employs around 7,000 people in the UK. It has a fleet of 1,180 vehicles.



All RSA employees are entitled to free eyesight testing, which they are advised to take up every two years or more depending on the advice of their optician. For employees with business cars, it is compulsory to have their eyes tested at least once every two years. RSA also pays for lenses and basic frames for employees that need them.

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Driver health: sleep apnoea

Sleep apnoea, literally 'sleep without breath', where sufferers wake during the night and do not realise they have not had a full night's sleep (and certain other health conditions such as epilepsy, diabetes, and high blood pressure), can affect drivers' ability to drive safely if untreated or not managed properly.⁷ Indeed, drivers who suffer from sleep apnoea are seven times more likely to crash than other drivers.⁸

Organisations are responsible for ensuring their drivers aren't risking their own lives and the lives of other road users by driving in an unfit state. Regular health checks and advice on health conditions to be aware of that may affect driving should be provided by employers to help guard against symptoms going unnoticed, not only for sleep apnoea, but for other conditions such as those mentioned above, as well as others like insomnia, stress or general ill-health.



We asked Does your company educate all drivers on specific health conditions like sleep apnoea that can result in tiredness at the wheel?

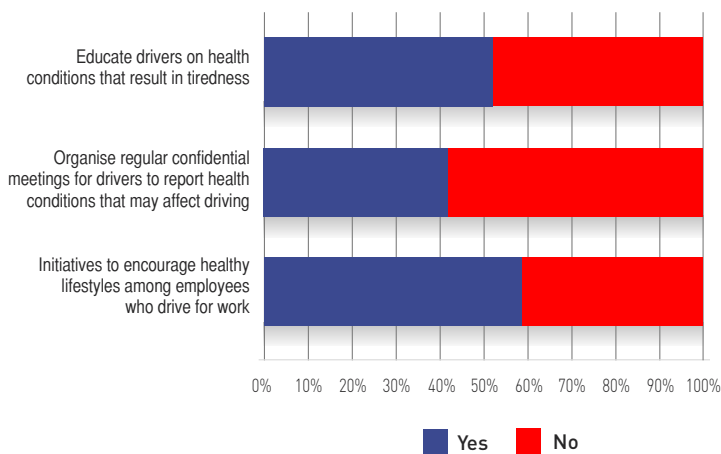
Only half (52%) of companies educate drivers on conditions like sleep apnoea.

We asked Does your company organise regular confidential meetings with drivers to give them an opportunity to report health conditions, stress, or medication that may affect their driving?

Only two fifths (40%) companies organise these regular confidential meetings.

We asked Do you have initiatives in place to encourage healthy lifestyles among employees who drive for work, to help prevent health problems, such as sleep conditions, that can affect safe driving?

A significant proportion (42.5%) of respondent companies reported not having initiatives in place to encourage healthy lifestyles among employees who drive for work.



Advice on sleep apnoea

- Educate drivers on specific medical conditions like sleep apnoea that can result in tiredness at the wheel. Give drivers written information about sleep apnoea, including a checklist of symptoms.
- Provide driver trainers and supervisors with training so they can be vigilant for signs of sleep apnoea among staff.
- Identify 'high risk' drivers, such as those who are obese. Put systems in place for helping these drivers understand the risks of sleep apnoea
- Make it a contractual requirement that drivers undergo regular health checks (at least annually) that include questionnaires and other checks, such as weight, relating to sleep apnoea symptoms.

- Make it a contractual requirement for all drivers to inform their manager if they are suffering from sleepiness at work.
- Introduce a written policy stating drivers must be taken off driving duty immediately if there are reasonable grounds for believing they are suffering from sleepiness while at work. Suspected sufferers of sleep apnoea should be referred for assessment and treatment.
- Introduce initiatives encouraging employees to maintain a healthy overall lifestyle, for instance cycle to work schemes, or offering discounted membership at a local gym.
- Reassure drivers that if they want to report any health concerns, stress, or medication that may affect their driving, they can talk to managers in confidence, and that they will not be penalised for doing so.

Dr Paul Jackson, Managing Director, Clockwork Research says:

“It is crucial that all levels of management understand the risks associated with sleep apnoea. In order to manage the risks it is important to raise awareness of sleep apnoea with drivers and their families. A driver’s partner is the most likely person to know if the driver is suffering from symptoms of sleep apnoea; by raising their awareness of the signs this can reduce the risk of drivers with an undiagnosed condition.”



Driver tiredness

Crashes caused by tiredness are often the most serious; research has shown that 20% of fatal crashes involve tired drivers⁹; if a driver has fallen asleep at the wheel they will not have applied the brakes at all prior to impact, resulting in a devastating high speed crash.

For at-work drivers, including many who drive for long hours, on long journeys, tiredness is a particular risk; 50% of at-work drivers get behind the wheel after less than five hours sleep.¹⁰ It’s also one that can be managed simply through appropriate education and awareness raising, as well as a responsible approach to planning and monitoring journey schedules and drivers’ hours. While a significant majority of respondents to this survey report have appropriate policies in place and educate drivers on the issue, a worryingly large proportion (40%) still do not analyse and plan their drivers’ hours, routes and mileage to minimise risk of tiredness.

We asked Does your company educate all drivers on what to do if they feel drowsy when driving?

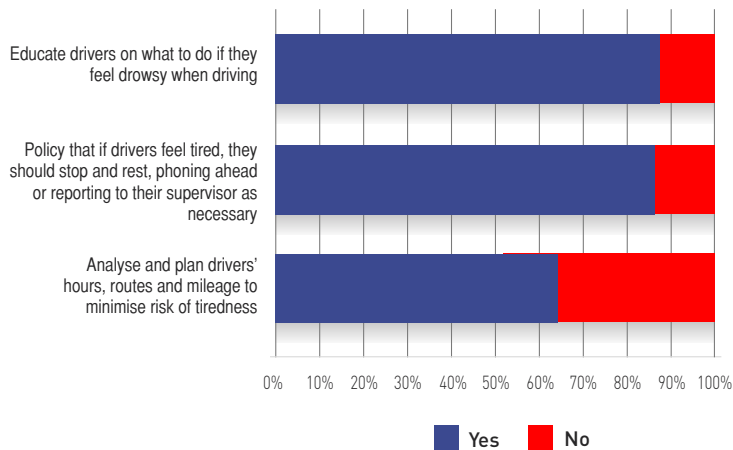
83.6% of respondents reported educating drivers on what to do if they feel drowsy when driving.

We asked Does your company have a policy saying that if drivers feel tired while on a journey, they should always stop and rest, phoning ahead or reporting to their supervisor as necessary?

82.1% of respondents reported having such a policy.

We asked Does your company analyse and plan drivers' hours, routes and mileage to ensure risks of tiredness are kept minimal?

40.3% of respondents said they do not analyse and plan drivers' hours, routes and mileage to ensure risks of tiredness are kept minimal.



Advice on tackling driver tiredness

- When scheduling drivers' journeys, allow sufficient time for pick-ups and drop-offs, traffic delays, unexpected hold ups, and scheduled rest breaks.
- Ensure drivers are not expected to work shifts that are too long, or to switch between day and night shifts without sufficient time off in between for their body clock to adjust.
- Ensure drivers take regular rest breaks even if they are behind schedule. It is recommended that drivers rest for at least 15 minutes every two hours¹¹, but some drivers may require more rest time than this.
- Advise drivers they should continue to take regular rest breaks even if they are behind schedule rather than just pressing on, that they should rearrange appointments if they are delayed, and that they can make an overnight stay at the company's expense if their journey time becomes significantly extended and they are too tired to continue.

- Educate drivers on the importance of heeding warning signs of tiredness, such as increased difficulty concentrating; yawning; heavy eyelids; eyes starting to "roll"; and the head drooping. Tell drivers that if they feel tired at the wheel they should pull over and rest as soon as possible.
- Warning systems that remind drivers when they need to take a scheduled rest can be fitted to vehicles. However, these systems are not a substitute for driver education and should only be used as part of a wider approach to tackling the problem.
- Encourage employees to use public transport or video conferencing instead of driving to meetings and appointments.
- Record information about work-related crashes, however minor, including the time of the incident, the distance the driver had driven, and how long prior to the incident their last rest break was. This can be useful in identifying incidents where tiredness was a factor.

Case study BP



BP is an international oil and gas company whose fleet travelled a collective 1.5 billion kilometres in 2011.

BP introduced policies in 2004 to standardise its global approach to road safety. Included were seven driver requirements, one of which was a requirement that drivers are "appropriately rested and alert".

BP employees are forbidden from driving when tired. They are instructed either to make alternative travel arrangements or ensure they are rested before continuing their journey.

All drivers are required to attend fatigue awareness training within six months of commencing driving for the company. Attendance is documented, and drivers who fail to attend in this time period are not allowed to drive for BP until they have attended the training.

BP's training is delivered internally and all BP trainers are trained by Awake Ltd, a specialist driver tiredness consultancy. The training has been delivered throughout Europe, the US and Asia and has been translated into 13 languages.

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Professor Jim Horne of the Sleep Research Centre at Loughborough University says:

“Sleep does not occur spontaneously without warning. Drivers falling asleep are unlikely to recollect having done so, but at the time would have been aware of the precursory increasing sleepiness; reaching a state of ‘fighting sleep’ prior to any collision. Thus the best countermeasure is driver (and employer) education about driver tiredness, and recognition that when a driver feels the need to use in-vehicle countermeasures such as opening the window, turning up the radio, etc, then this is the time to stop driving and take a break.”



The Fleet Safety Forum is a not-for-profit subscription service for fleet managers by Brake, the road safety charity. The Forum produces regular guidance, research and resources for fleet managers to assist them in improving safety. It also runs a program of professional events including an annual conference and workshops on a wide range of topics, allowing fleet managers to hear from academics and other practitioners about reducing occupational road risk. To find out more or to subscribe for a low annual fee, visit www.fleetsafetyforum.org



Brake runs the Road Safety Library, a free online portal to road safety research by institutions around the globe, on topics covered in this guidance and many more. Go to www.roadsafetylibrary.org

End Notes

- 1 *Prevalence of Alcohol and Other Drugs in Fatally Injured Drivers*, Columbia University College of Physicians, 2012
- 2 *The relationship between serious injury and blood alcohol concentration*, University of California San Diego, 2011
- 3 *Medications and driving*, Queensland University of Technology, 2012.
- 4 *The Green Flag Report on Safe Driving (part 7): At-work drivers*, Brake, 2007
- 5 *Report on driver vision and screening in Europe*, The European Council of Optometry and Optics, 2011.
- 6 Royal National Institute for the Blind, 2009
- 7 *Medical conditions, medication use and their relationship with subsequent motor vehicle injuries*, The University of Western Ontario, 2012.
- 8 *Sleep Apnoea Trust*, Website: www.sleep-apnoea-trust.org
- 9 *Fatigue a proven killer on the road*, CARRS-Q, 2009.
- 10 *Driver tiredness survey*, Loughborough Sleep Research Centre, 2004.
- 11 *Road Transport (Working Time) Regulations 2005*, European Union, 2005.



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