

## **Volunteering - Keeping Safe Driving**

### **Potential harms**

- Road traffic incident due to faulty vehicle or equipment, distraction from road or poor weather conditions, causing major injury/death
- Dog colliding with driver or other person during a road traffic accident resulting in a major injury or death

### **Best practice and controls**

If you use your personal vehicle for volunteering activities, it is recommended you discuss your activities with your insurance provider to ensure you have appropriate cover.

#### **Safe driving depends on a safe vehicle**

As well as regular servicing and MOT's, ensure that you undertake regular basic visual checks to ensure all is working as it should and you have no damage or fault.

#### **Basic vehicle check should include**

- Outside and inside visual check
- Lights and indicators
- Brake, oil and coolant fluid levels
- Tyre pressure, tread and wear and tear
- Wipers, washers and demisters
- Seat belts

#### **Plan to drive safely**

A planned journey reduces the risk of drowsiness or falling asleep at the wheel and is more efficient saving you time and stress.

- Plan your appointments taking account of travel time, route, and possible congestion areas
- Change your schedule if your journey time is unrealistic or doesn't give you enough time for regular breaks
- Know your route and junctions before you start your journey
- Find out about weather and traffic conditions before you set out

- Stop when you feel tired. As a minimum, stop every two hours for at least 15 minutes. Get out of the vehicle for fresh air and to stretch
- Take account of the need to have an overnight stop if appropriate

### **Avoid distractions**

You need two hands on the wheel, two eyes on the road and your whole mind on your driving.

- Don't eat or drink while driving
- Don't use/programme electronic devices like phones or route planners whilst driving
- Don't let loud music, passengers or map reading distract your attention from the road

### **Anticipate problems**

- Pedestrians, cyclists, and people in parked vehicles may not always act the way you expect. Take care when approaching pedestrian crossings and level crossings
- Check mirrors regularly. Be aware of other road users. Be proactive instead of reactive
- Never go faster than road and weather conditions allow

### **Sit properly**

- Poor posture when driving can lead to back and other musculoskeletal pain
- Make sure that you are as comfortable as possible and that all driving controls and switches are within easy reach
- Ensure you adjust your seat on a regular basis

### **Special driving conditions**

#### **Night driving**

- Keep headlights and the windscreen clean
- Increase the distance between you and the car in front
- Avoid looking into oncoming headlights. Use the lane markers as a guide

#### **Snow and ice**

- Keep windscreens, windows and lights clear
- Slow down and keep well back from the car in front
- Accelerate and brake slowly, taking special care on bends

## **Rain and fog**

- Reduce speed in fog and on wet roads
- Use dipped headlights to reduce glare
- Increase the distance between you and the car in front

## **Road conditions**

- Sand, gravel, and even wet leaves can reduce the grip on the road so slow down
- Take care as you approach road works, reduce speed, and get in the correct lane as soon as possible

## **Fitness to drive**

All drivers have a responsibility to ensure that they are fit to drive. A journey should never be started if you are feeling excessively tired or unwell.

Ensure that you take regular eyesight and eye health checks. If required, wear any corrective glasses, or contact lenses when driving.

## **Fatigue and stress**

Stress can result in fatigue which can lead to reduced levels of attention and judgement. To minimise the risk of stress and fatigue while driving:

- Give yourself extra time to get to your destination
- If you are running late, stop in a safe place and call to explain, do not rush
- Avoid peak time travel if you can
- Choose the most practical route
- Limit your driving periods to reasonable times or distances

## **Alcohol and drugs**

Alcohol and drugs will affect your judgement, slow down reaction times and give a false sense of confidence. Some prescription medication can cause drowsiness, blurred vision or other side effects. Ask your pharmacist about any medication you take and if you should drive.

Remember that it can take a long time for alcohol and drugs to leave your body, therefore your ability to drive can be affected and you may still be over the limit or under the influence the morning after you have had a lot to drink or taken drugs.

## **Breakdowns**

### **If your vehicle breaks down:**

- Get your vehicle off the road if possible
- Warn other traffic by using your hazard warning lights
- Keep your sidelights on if it is dark or visibility is poor
- Do not stand between your vehicle and oncoming traffic or where you will prevent other road users seeing your lights

### **Additional rules for the motorway**

Leave the motorway at the next exit or pull into a service area. If you cannot do so, you should:

- Pull onto the hard shoulder and stop as far to the left as possible, with your wheels turned to the left
- Try to stop near an emergency telephone
- Leave the vehicle by the left-hand door and ensure your passengers do the same
- You should leave any animals in the vehicle or, in an emergency, keep them under proper control on the verge
- Do not attempt even simple repairs
- Keep away from the carriageway and hard shoulder
- Walk to an emergency telephone on your side of the carriageway. The telephone is free of charge and connects directly to the police. Use these in preference to a mobile phone. You should never walk on a motorway hard shoulder for any reason other than to get to and from an emergency phone
- Give full details to the police; also inform them if you are a vulnerable motorist such as a woman travelling alone or if you have young children
- Return and wait near your vehicle, well away from the carriageway and hard shoulder
- If you feel at risk from another person, return to your vehicle by a left-hand door and lock all doors. Leave your vehicle again as soon as you feel this danger has passed

### **If you cannot get your vehicle on to the hard shoulder:**

- Do not attempt to place any warning device on the carriageway
- Switch on your hazard warning lights
- Leave your vehicle only when you can safely get clear of the carriageway

## **Accidents happen**

If you see or hear emergency vehicles in the distance be aware there may be an accident ahead. When passing the scene of an accident do not be distracted or slow down unnecessarily.

### **If you are involved in an accident**

- Use your hazard warning lights to warn other traffic
- Switch off your engine
- Arrange for the emergency services to be called immediately with full details of the accident location and any casualties
- Move uninjured people away from the vehicles to safety
- Do not move injured people from their vehicles unless they are in immediate danger from fire or explosion
- Do not remove a motorcyclist's helmet unless it is essential to do so
- Stay at the scene until emergency services arrive

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