Chapter 15

Managing

Occupational Road Risk

August 1996

Memorandum of essential principles

For many employees being killed or seriously injured while driving on the road as part of their job represents the biggest occupational risk to which they are likely to be exposed.

The effective control of such risk is a matter covered by employers’ duties under the Health and Safety at Work Act and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations. All employing organisations need, therefore to ensure that they fully integrate their management of occupational road risk into their overall health and safety management arrangements.

This in turn presupposes that they have health and safety management systems in place which incorporate advice contained in the HSE’s guidance Successful health and safety management [HS(G)65], including for example, access to competent health and safety advice and effective workforce involvement and consultation.

The potential benefits of this approach include not only a reduction in injuries, suffering and damage due to road accidents at work but major financial savings as a result of lower accident costs, reduced insurance premiums as well as improvements in business efficiency and workforce morale. It can also make a major contribution to the improvement of road safety generally.

The following sets out a series of essential principles which RoSPA believes all organisations should seek to apply in order to ensure safety in relation to road vehicle used connected with their activities.

Key principles

- **Policy.** The organisation’s statutory health and safety policy document should include clear statements which show explicitly that its policy extends to ensuring the safety of staff (and others) in connection with the use of vehicles on the road as part of their work. The policy statement should contain a clear commitment, endorsed at the highest level, to pursue continuous improvement in work related road safety as well as to provide necessary resources to achieve this.

- **Organisation.** The responsibilities of key staff at every level within the organisation who are charged with achieving these objectives should be clearly spelled out together with necessary levels of competence. They should also be provided with the necessary resources to enable them to meet their responsibilities.
Planning and Implementation. A planned approach to the assurance of road safety should be adopted based on the results of suitable and sufficient risk assessment. Targets for the achievement of continuous improvement should be set and appropriate risk management measures put in place.

These targets should address issues such as: vehicle specifications, selection and maintenance; driver assessment and improvement (including training and retraining); information provision and supervision; driver health and fitness standards; work scheduling and drivers hours; route specification and journey timing; emergency procedures; accident, incident and problem reporting and recording; as well as policy on issues such as alcohol and drugs.

Driver development and training must be given high priority.

Measuring Performance. Organisations committed to continuous improvement in occupational road safety performance should have in place regimes of active and reactive monitoring to gather data with which to assess achievement of targets and identify areas requiring further action.

Active monitoring should include arrangements for regular inspection and checking to ensure that standards are being implemented throughout the organisation. Reactive monitoring should involve investigating the causes of accidents and incidents to identify why performance has been substandard.

Review and Audit. Organisations should also regularly review their occupational road safety performance against their stated objectives and agreed targets in the light of data from active and reactive monitoring to identify problems and the need for any necessary changes.

Periodically they may wish to arrange for an independent audit of their management of occupational road safety to check that their policy, organisation and arrangements are appropriate and effective. Such an audit should include examination of a range of indicators to help determine: the degree of compliance with essential standards; areas where standards are absent or inadequate; achievement of state objectives within agreed timescales; and analysis of immediate and underlying causes of accidents and incidents, together with consideration of trends and common features.

Recognition of Achievement

Awards. Organisations should recognise and confirm achievement by their staff of significant improvements in their occupational road safety performance by putting in place appropriate award schemes.
November 1996

Response from readers of local papers

The predominant theme which emerged from all those submitting evidence was that of the excessive number of hours many people feel compelled to work behind the wheel and the fact that the writers are acutely aware of the level of risk this poses for themselves and other road users. This seems to be the case both for those people who would be thought of as ‘driving for a living’ (e.g. those driving lorries, goods and delivery vans, public service vehicles, taxis, couriers etc) and those who need to use vehicles as a subsidiary part of their main jobs (reps and peripatetic workers of all descriptions, estate agents, medical professionals, teachers etc).

For instance, a sales rep, with a company car and whose territory covers the South of England and South Wales travels an average of 1,000 miles every 5-day working week.

“I often feel I have signed my own death sentence – and maybe other people’s. Two weeks ago, I knocked a motorcyclist over (fortunately he had only minor injuries). The accident was caused because of my lack of concentration: I was tired; under a great deal of stress and worrying about the work – not the road.”

The driver of an electrical components van, frequently driving 600 miles a day, said he had “fallen asleep behind the wheel more times than I would ever care to admit.” Once he “woke up literally centimetres behind a petrol tanker. How I missed it I will never know.” This man says he gave up the job “solely because the demands the company were making on me caused me grave concern both for my own safety and the safety of other road users.”

Another common theme was – to put the best gloss possible on it – was the lack of management understanding about how much stress is placed on those working/driving long hours. However, most believe that managers understand the pressures very well – but are reluctant to step in because of the pressures they themselves face, namely to get the job out and delivered no matter what.

“So long as the firm got the job done, it just didn’t want to know. I complained once about the 14 hours that I regularly spent behind the wheel and was told I was a wimp”; “companies’ need for profit puts a tremendous pressure on employees to increase production. This means a company driver must get from A to B as quickly as possible, and taking many risks in the process ...” are two typical comments.

While talking about the ‘appalling service order’ of his firm’s vehicles – and the fact that every penny spent (on maintenance etc) was begrudged, one writer said “… weights well in excess of those reasonable was an every day thing. Needless to say, if you complained about the weight or the condition of the vehicle, you may as well have gone and looked for another job. The runs had to be made – the safety of the driver was the last consideration.”
One respondent spoke of a relative, a highly qualified HGV driver (with a RoSPA Gold level safe driving award) but wondered whether this man’s employers “will allow him the time and space to practise his safe driving on a day to day basis.”

“In any transport organisation, the customer takes priority to anything else and the most usual instruction from the transport manager is ‘to get it done at all costs.’”

The last writer also mentioned the huge increase in private mail and parcel delivery firms, their vehicles’ sides proudly emblazoned with ‘overnight guaranteed delivery’ or ‘same day delivery’ as symptomatic of today’s approach.

Another correspondent raised a concern about the reliability of hire cars which her company insisted on their employees using whenever they needed to visit various sites. “If it is dark, the controls are often not immediately discernible; one has no idea of the vehicle’s special characteristics, performance etc. It sometimes takes a significant time to find the windscreen demister control, headlight dip mechanism etc all the time driving in a rush.”

Suggestions for action included:

• that restrictions be placed on the number of hours any worker is allowed to drive without a break (and that the hours spent performing other work before having to drive again should be taken into consideration);
• that greater restrictions be placed on precisely who is allowed to drive vehicles other than cars. (“How does one get across,” asked one writer, “that the basic car test is far from adequate to equip you to drive a minibus?” while another suggested that all commercial drivers should be made to take a test in the vehicles in which they work).
• a call for legislation to ensure transport companies concentrate more on their drivers’ health and safety rather than on thinking of them as ‘high speed delivery men’.

RoSPA has recently held conference to which many of the key players in this field were invited. (A full report will be given in a future OS&H). The intention now is to use the results from that conference and from the insights given by readers’ letters to draw up practicable guidelines for all employers on how to manage risks faced by those who drive as part of their jobs.
June 1997

Update on MORR campaign

During 1997/8 RoSPA’s lead occupational safety key issue is occupational road risk. The aim is to persuade organisations to address work related road risk the same way as they manage other work related risks. This is intended to build on RoSPA’s involvement in both occupational and road safety, drawing on its extensive experience as a provider of driver training and of high level occupational health and safety consultancy.

- Developing a risk management approach

The Society believes that:

(1) the levels of risk faced by those who use vehicles are part of their job are quite significant. (Nearly a quarter of all road fatalities appear to be work related. Driving 25,000 miles per year for work may produce a greater annual risk of occupational fatality than coal mining!);

(2) a modern safety management ‘systems’ approach, informed by risk assessment, can be highly effective in reducing the frequency and/or severity of ‘at work’ road accidents. (Risk control measures can address issues such as route specification, scheduling; time and distance limits, vehicle selection and maintenance and, of course, driver training);

(3) such a response by organisations is highly appropriate given the wide ranging implications of employers’ duties of care in both statute and common law; and

(4) improving safety of vehicle fleets will not only be highly cost effective but will also make a major contribution to reducing road casualties (and their associated costs) in the UK.

- Campaign initiatives to date

RoSPA’s discussion document, Managing Occupational Road Risk, was launched in February 1996 and its recommendations have been widely supported.

Other initiatives have included: high level ‘focus’ seminars for key players held at Esso, and the Engineering Employers’ Federation, a research proposal (for which funding support is being sought) looking at the effectiveness of ORR control measures; the collection of anecdotal from occupational drivers; circulation of a RoSPA Memorandum on managing ORR; sessions on ORR at RoSPA’s Congresses; coverage in national media and trade press; and in RoSPA’s journals, Occupational Safety and Health (OSH), Care on the Road (COR) and SAFETY express.

- ‘Focus’ seminars

Key participants in the seminars, held on 29 October and 22 January, included MPs, a representative of the CEC, road safety bodies, major employers, trades unions, Government departments and academics. The purpose was: to bring together a range
of key players including organisations with direct experience of managing ORR; to facilitate exploration of ORR issues; to enable the exchange of information and views and ongoing ‘networking’; and to identify possible areas for future collaboration.

Some key issues which emerged during the seminars included:

- where responsibility for ORR belongs in organisations (safety adviser, fleet manager or elsewhere);
- how to get the ‘business case’ for ORR management across to senior directors;
- the need to clarify the interface between occupational safety and road safety law;
- the need to avoid potentially burdensome bureaucratic and regulatory approaches;
- the potential contribution of an ORR management approach to meeting future national road safety targets;
- the effectiveness of different approaches to ORR control (viz journey management versus driver training);
- the role of occupational road injury reporting (on which proposals were recently shelved by the HSC);
- developing practicable approaches to risk assessment;
- demonstrating the costs of accidents versus costs of preventative measures;
- learning preventative lessons from occupational road accidents;
- ORR management and ‘safety culture’;
- incentives for good performance (appropriateness/effectiveness);
- compensation (common law or motor policy routes);
- evaluating different approaches to driver training;
- how to measure ORR management performance; and
- possible approaches to ORR management audit.

Next steps…

The next phase of the campaign will involve RoSPA collaborating with key players to produce guidance for employers on how to develop a risk management approach covering: policy; organisation; planning and implementation; (active and reactive) monitoring; and review and audit. A draft is nearing completion and the Society is presently seeking funding support from a number of sources to secure publication and dissemination. RoSPA will then seek support from influential organisations for the approach being advocated.
Company vehicle speed code

Last year an estimated 1,050 people were killed and over 13,000 were seriously injured in road accidents in which the inappropriate use of speed was a major contributory factor. Travelling faster than road conditions safely allow increases both the probability of vehicle accidents and the severity of resulting injuries. Research by the Transport Research Laboratory suggests that company car drivers have a 30 - 40 per cent greater involvement in road accidents than those driving for domestic purposes. The victims of ‘at work’ vehicle accidents include not only company drivers and passengers but other road users, including vulnerable groups such as elderly and child pedestrians and cyclists.

These facts are highly relevant to all organisations in the light of their legal and moral duty of care to manage the risks faced and created by their staff who drive on the road as part of their work.

RoSPA has already issued consensus guidance showing how managing occupational road risk (MORR) can be tackled within the management system framework which organisations should already have in place for addressing other occupational health and safety problems. It has also developed courses on MORR and provides a range of driver services, including a driver assessment tool, a range of driving development courses and an awards scheme for recognising accident free driving.

A key theme in RoSPA’s approach is that MORR requires a sustained approach, with continuous development of policies, people and procedures to ‘work the problem’ so that organisations can achieve progressive reductions in levels of risk, harm and loss associated with company vehicle use. It also requires organisations to set standards and have monitoring arrangements in place to help ‘drive’ the improvement process.

The ten point code opposite has been produced by RoSPA to help organisations develop their occupational road risk policies to tackle inappropriate use of speed by their employees. To support this, the following steps are suggested:

**Review.** RoSPA suggests that, in consultation with workforce representatives, all organisations should review their existing policies, standards and arrangements against this code and develop a prioritised action plan with timescales for implementation.

**Support.** RoSPA calls on all industry and trade associations, professional and road safety bodies, trades unions, insurers, local authorities, and police forces to support the code and to commend it to their members.

**Feedback.** The Society is anxious to hear from companies and other organisations that have taken successful initiatives to discourage inappropriate use of speed by their employees so that examples of good practice can be communicated to other organisations.
Ten Point Company Vehicle Speed Code

1. **Safe driving.** The organisation should make it clear that it expects its employees to drive safely for their own benefit and that of other road users. It should emphasise that the achievement of good progress on the road does not depend on the inappropriate use of speed.

2. **Keeping within speed limits.** In that context, it should make it clear that: it expects all its employees to never drive faster than road conditions allow; that they should obey speed limits at all times; and that persistent failure to do so will be regarded as a serious matter.

3. **Leading by example.** As in other areas of company policy, senior managers should lead by personal example, both in the way they drive themselves and in encouraging colleagues to drive safely.

4. **Planning safe journeys.** The organisations should also make it clear that every journey must be planned with safety in mind, allowing sufficient time to enable employees to travel at safe speeds and comply with speed limits – taking account of reasonably foreseeable weather and road traffic conditions and allowing sufficient time for rest breaks to avoid fatigue.

5. **Avoiding incentives to speed.** The organisation should avoid having in place work targets, systems of work or performance related methods of remuneration which may create pressures which lead its employees to use speed inappropriately and travel at speeds which are likely to be unsafe or in excess of the set speed limits.

6. **Vehicle allocation.** It should ensure that the performance characteristics of its vehicles are matched to the competence level of those drivers to whom they are allocated.

7. **Monitoring compliance.** It should consider and put in place appropriate monitoring arrangements to assess the extent of compliance by its employees with its policy on speed. This should include options such as: feedback by employees themselves; monitoring licences for points and recording all fixed penalty tickets issued to company car drivers; use of ‘roadwatch’ reporting schemes; and selective use of technology such as tachographs, on-board ‘black boxes’ and GPS (global positioning system) based telematics which can give a record of average and maximum speeds.

8. **Investigating accidents.** Wherever practicable ‘at work’ vehicle accidents should be investigated by the organisation to determine whether inappropriate use of speed by the employee was a contributory factor.

9. **Liasing with police forces and road safety bodies.** The organisation should seek to liaise with police forces and other road safety bodies as appropriate, to establish if and how co-operation can be achieved in pursuit of its policy on vehicle speed.

10. **Raising awareness.** The organisation should ensure that: its policy on safe use of speed is clearly communicated to all employees (including during driver training);
that it is backed by appropriate publicity; and that awareness of the policy and the issues involved is maintained through regular communications and feedback - both on high standards of compliance as well as on cases where drivers have failed to comply.
September 1999

Company driver competence code

- Car and van drivers who cover 25,000 miles a year as part of their job are at virtually the same risk of being killed at work as coal miners.
- Out of a total of 3,600 road accident fatalities every year, RoSPA estimates that between 800 and 1,000 may be occurring in accidents involving vehicles being driven for work purposes.
- The Health and Safety Executive’s survey of self reported work related injury shows there are some 77,000 injuries to employees every year as a result of ‘at work’ road accidents.
- Employers have moral as well as legal duties to assess these risks and take ‘reasonably practicable measures’ to ensure ‘safe system of work’ for their drivers.
- Companies which take action to promote the safety of their staff while driving can reduce accident costs, make efficiency savings, improve their image (a company’s drivers are its ambassadors on the road!) and make a significant contribution to meeting UK road safety targets.

Managing Occupational Road Risk (MORR)

RoSPA has already issued consensus guidance on managing occupational road risk, showing how risk on the road can be tackled within the same management system framework which should already be in place for addressing other occupational health and safety problems. The Society has also developed a course on MORR and provides a range of driver services, including driver development courses and an awards scheme for recognising accident free driving.

In the first instance organisations should seek to control risk on the road by reducing or eliminating the need to travel by this mode or by designing safe journeys and specifying safe vehicles. Wherever driving is a necessary part of work they must ensure that employees have the necessary competence to drive safely. The ten point driver competence code has been produced by RoSPA to supplement its existing MORR guidance and to help organisations review their policies and arrangements for ensuring the competence of their drivers.

Review. RoSPA suggests that, in consultation with workforce representatives, organisations should review their existing policies and arrangements against this code and develop a prioritised action plan for any improvements that may be required with timescales for implementation.

Support. RoSPA calls on all industry, trade, professional and road safety organisations, trades unions, insurers, local authorities and police forces to support the principles in this code and commend them to their members and others.

Feedback and more information. The Society is anxious to hear from organisations that have taken action successfully to achieve continuous improvement in competence standards so that examples of good practice can be placed in the public domain. For further information on RoSPA's MORR campaign and the Society's driver services,
visit the website at www.rospa.co.uk or contact Roger Bibbings at the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents, RoSPA House, Edgbaston Park, 353 Bristol Road, Birmingham B5 7ST (Tel 0121 248 2000; fax 0121 248 2001; E-mail rbibbings@rospa.com).

**Ten Point Company Driver Competence Code**

1. **Safe driving competence.** As part of its overall commitment to manage occupational road risk, the organisation should have clear statements in place which indicate that it will take steps to ensure the competence of its employees to drive safely whenever they are required to drive vehicles as part of their job.

2. **Assessment.** Such competence should be assessed at interview and/or prior to the allocation of driving tasks. Assessment should take account of the attitude, knowledge, driving skills, age, experience, accident history and past training record.

3. **Minimum standards.** The organisation should set a minimum standard of driving competence to be met by all employees before they can drive vehicles on the road on its behalf, recognising that driving skills deteriorate with time and that possession of a driving licence of itself does not necessarily imply such competence. It many also choose to apply such standards to any other named drivers of its vehicles.

4. **Prioritised driver development.** The organisation should put in place a prioritised programme of driver development, including defensive driver training, which is designed to meet the development needs of those staff with greatest needs (for example, based on evidence from assessment, risk exposure, in-service accident experience and so on.)

5. **Monitoring and review.** The organisation should have effective arrangements in place to monitor the implementation and effectiveness of their policy on driver development, including: monitoring adherence to assessment procedures and delivery of training; the driving behaviour of its employees on road (for example, by studying feedback from drivers, use of ‘road watch’ schemes, monitoring of on-road traffic offences, use of technology etc); identifying the extent of any shortfall in driver competence revealed by accident and incident investigation; and reviewing the impact of training on accident rates.

6. **Continuous improvement.** The organisation should make it clear that it wishes to achieve a record of continuous improvement in individual, group and corporate standards of driving competence.

7. **Targets.** To this end it may choose to set targets for improvement in assessed standards of driving competence for individuals, key groups and/or for the whole organisation.

8. **Leadership by example.** All senior managers should make a personal commitment to lead the policy by example, both in emphasising the importance of driving competence to colleagues, in identifying the level of competence which they seek to achieve themselves by training and in their everyday driving behaviour.
9. **Recognition of achievement.** The organisation should ensure that achievement in developing and maintaining driving competence is recognised and commended to colleagues, for example through issuing of certificates of assessed training achievement to individuals and/or groups, by use of award schemes and by other suitable means which make such achievement visible to key audiences.

10. **Raising awareness.** The organisation should ensure that: its policy on driver competence and development is communicated effectively to all its employees; that it is backed by appropriate publicity; and that awareness of the issues involved is maintained through regular communications and feedback.

SAFE DRIVERS NEVER STOP LEARNING!
May 2001

Work Related Road Safety Task Group

The WRRSTG is initiating a national debate around the proposition that employers should be managing risks faced (and created) by their employees on the road as part of health and safety at work. The underlying idea is that organisations should be taking action to promote the safety of their staff while at work on the road, whether as drivers, passengers or pedestrians.

The Group, chaired by Richard Dykes, a senior director in the Post Office, are convinced that occupational road risk is a major but still generally neglected issue. In part this is because the Health and Safety at Work Act has not been enforced in this area. However, it is clear that there is a very strong ‘business case’ for action in this field. Not only can Managing Occupational Road Risk (MORR) improve overall employee safety but it can help reduce the resulting costs of accidents and create efficiency savings, improve and organisation’s safety image and make a significant contribution to meeting UK road safety targets.

RoSPA, which is represented on WRRSTG, has been campaigning for the last six years for organisations to adopt a proactive risk management approach to reducing the risks connected with ‘at work’ vehicle use. The arguments for employers to get more involved were first set out in detail in a RoSPA discussion document which was circulated to ‘key players’ in February 1996 to stimulate debate. Following a series of high level seminars in 1996/7, RoSPA published its own consensus guidance in March 1998 with input from an expert reference group and funding and support from BT, Cornhill, Esso, Schlumberger, Royal Mail and Bayer.

RoSPA followed this up shortly afterwards by convening a ‘summit’ of key players at Bayer plc’s Stoke Court headquarters and a series of ‘road shows’ to raise awareness of the issue.

When developing its guidance RoSPA estimated that, out of a total of 3,400 road accident fatalities every year, between 800 and 1,000 were likely to be occurring in accidents involving vehicles being driven for work purposes. At first this was doubted by HSE but consultants engaged subsequently by WRRSTG to research the casualty background have confirmed RoSPA’s estimates as broadly correct. Further evidence comes the HSE’s survey of self reported work related injury which has shown that there are some 77,000 injuries to employees every year as a result of ‘at work’ road accidents.

Employers clearly have moral as well as legal duties to assess the ‘at work’ road risks and take ‘reasonably practicable measures’ to ensure ‘safe systems of work’ for their drivers. Many practical and cost effective control measures can be put in place, for example: by exploring safer alternatives to travel by road; specification of safest routes; setting standards for safe schedules, journey times and distance limits; ensuring safe maintenance; ensuring drivers are fit; and having suitable driver selection, assessment and development arrangements in place.

What RoSPA has been arguing however is that ‘at work’ road safety is not just a question of introducing specific control measures. The primary focus must be on
ensuring that organisations have a systematic risk management capability, adapting the ‘systems approach’ to health and safety management advocated in guidance documents such as HSG65 and BS 8800.

In other words, unless organisations have established and communicated clear road safety policies and objectives; unless they have specified the responsibilities and competences required to achieve them at every level; unless they have a planned approach to risk control informed by risk assessment and targets; and unless they can monitor their road safety performance and feedback lessons from periodic review - they will not be able to achieve a cycle of continuous improvement.

Managing risk on the road, like managing any kind of work related risk, cannot be achieved by one-off interventions. Organisations need to focus, in the first instance, on the policies, people and procedures (or ‘system’) which they need to have in place and establish the ‘process’ for working the problem before trying to find solutions.

A RoSPA course on MORR, aimed at health and safety professionals and fleet/vehicle managers, has now been run several times. RoSPA is also a major provider of driver services, including defensive driver training. Besides continuing to market these services and its MORR package, RoSPA is working to develop other tools and guidance. The next step, with input from HSE and Powergen, is to establish a ‘High Performers Review Group’ of major organisations which have already developed a management system approach.

Scope of the debate

RoSPA is planning to make an input to the WRRSTG debate. The scale of risk, harm and loss associated with ‘at work’ road accidents will need to be clearly set out at both the macro and micro levels so that policy makers and enforcers can re-assess where they stand and employers can be challenged to review their own at-work road safety performance in business terms.

Health and safety management ‘system’ concepts may not be as immediately accessible to those from a road as opposed to an occupational safety background. RoSPA will be stressing the need for all the ‘key players’, including road safety professionals, to get to grips with HSG65 concepts so that there is a clear understanding of the primary importance of having the overall ‘system capability’ in place to manage risk (including risk on the road), rather than focusing purely on control measures.

Similarly there will be a need to focus on ‘safety culture’ both as a determinant of manager and driver behaviour and in terms of using MORR programmes as a ‘health and safety culture builder’.

There is going to have to be a clear and practical focus on the responsibilities of managers of workers who are required to drive or work on the road as part of their job. Case study examples of what this means in practice will need to be given, as will positives examples of senior management leadership by words and deeds, including senior managers’ own driving behaviour!
Also near the top of the agenda will be a debate about how to establish more effective enforcement liaison arrangements between the police, the vehicle inspectorate and health and safety enforcers. RoSPA would like to see HSE extending its inspection of employers’ site transport arrangements to look at their systems and standards for controlling risk on the road. Where employers fail to create a safe system of driving (excessive hours, incentives to speed, required use of mobile phones on the move etc) they should be investigated and prosecuted.
February 2002

The implications of Selby

In the wake of the conviction of Gary Hart for causing the deaths of 10 people in the Selby crash by dangerous driving, RoSPA has again highlighted the risks created by sleepy motorists. In a press release following the verdict, Kevin Clinton, RoSPA’s Head of Road Safety, said, “Selby was unusual combination of circumstances, but it demonstrated the full horror we can face because of selfish drivers who are not honest enough to admit they are a menace on the road.”

He also pointed out the importance of employers ensuring that their employees, including company car and van drivers, do not drive when they are tired.

Although not discussed at length, the question of driver fatigue has been addressed in the recent report of the Government’s independent Work Related Road Safety Task Group (on which RoSPA was represented).

In drawing up guidance for employers on managing occupational road risk (as recommended it should by the Task Group), HSE will need to give clear guidance on the avoidance of driver impairment due to fatigue and steps that should be taken to prevent drivers falling asleep at the wheel. In particular HSE will need to set out the facts about sleepiness when driving and how to address this when carrying out risk assessment and monitoring performance.

The Selby case has emphasised once again that driver fatigue is a serious but still under-recognised road safety issue. Largely as a result of the sterling work of Professor Jim Horne and Dr Louise Reyner of the Sleep Research Unit at Loughborough University, it is now considered that driver sleepiness plays a significant part in up to 25 per cent of vehicle accidents on motorways, longer dual carriageways and other fast roads.

Professor Horne’s work has shown that accidents due to falling asleep at the wheel are more likely to occur at certain times of day – typically from midnight to 2.00am, in the early hours of the morning from 4.00am to 6.00am and in the early to mid afternoon, typically 2.00 - 4.00pm. Also, because drivers who fall asleep at the wheel usually fail to take evasive action (such as braking and swerving) before crashing, the resulting impacts and injuries are generally more severe than in other kinds of road accident.

Factors which may predispose drivers to falling asleep at the wheel include:

- the amount and quality of sleep before driving (the most important factor);
- consumption of sleep inducing drugs and/or alcohol;
- certain kinds of illness;
- boredom (especially on long, featureless roads); and
- age (the tendency to ‘dip’ increases in middle years).

Contrary to the myth that drivers can suddenly lapse into sleep while driving, Professor Horne’s research confirms that drivers who fall asleep at the wheel are
conscious of feeling sleepy and continue to ‘fight’ sleep for some time before crashes occur. They may however have fallen asleep for a short period, say 30 seconds (in which time, at 70 mph, they will have travelled over 1000 yards!) but have no recollection of this.

Driving while fatigued is an offence under road traffic law and may result in the driver being prosecuted leading to imprisonment and other penalties. Where employers have caused their employees to work and/or drive for so long that they become dangerously fatigued, they too may be guilty of an offence and may be liable to prosecution under road traffic or health and safety law.

The key message to employers is that, when assessing risks to establish safe systems of driving, they should ensure that ‘the driver is fit to drive and that the drive is fit for the driver’.

In practice this means firstly that employees should be reminded of the need to get an adequate amount of good quality sleep before starting to drive. Rest is not a substitute for sleep. Employees whose sleep may be interrupted, for example, by having to care for young children or sick or elderly relatives during the night, should be encouraged to report this to their managers and be reassured that this will not lead to them being discriminated against unfairly. (And that should be the truth!)

Employers should review shift arrangements to see that these do not lead employees to drive while fatigued. Where particular shift patterns may give rise to a potential problem, including increasing risks during commuting to and from work, safer, alternative transport should be considered.

Employers should ensure that employees are not over-tired at the start of journeys and that they are not required to drive for an excessive number of hours. Journeys should be carefully planned in advance and designed so as to enable drivers to take a break of at least 15 minutes every two hours. Drivers should be advised against driving home for long distances after a day’s work away from their normal base. Instead, consideration should be given to always allowing drivers to ‘overnight’ away from home, while recognising that many employees will seek to return home for domestic reasons.

As part of driver training, employers should ensure that drivers are reminded about:

- the danger of falling asleep at the wheel;
- the need for adequate sleep before starting to drive;
- the early signs of fatigue;
- the times of day at which sleepiness is most common;
- the strategies which they can employ to cope with its onset should it occur; and
- strategies which are ineffective.

In particular, employers should stress that when drivers feel sleepy, they must stop in a safe place as soon as practicable. Warnings should also be given about ineffective coping strategies (winding the windows down, turning up the radio, singing songs, chewing gum). If sleepiness does occur the best short-term measure is the consumption of two cups of strong coffee followed by a five to ten minute nap. It is
important to stress that this should not be used more than once in a single journey and that sleep should not last more than fifteen minutes.

Finally, employers need to be able to monitor driver sleepiness along with other key indicators of at-work road safety performance. Managers, for example, should ask their drivers about this problem during periodic performance appraisals. Drivers should be encouraged and thanked for reporting on instances when they have experienced sleepiness at the wheel, both to share such experiences with colleagues and to see what lessons, if any, can be learned. Journey planning should be monitored to see whether safe journey parameters are being observed. Crashes while driving for work, particularly those with no other apparent cause, should be investigated to establish whether fatigue may have been a contributory factor.
January 2003

Driving offences and company discipline

RoSPA, together with a number of other organisations (visit www.orsa.org.uk) has been campaigning for risk on the road while at work to be managed and regulated as a mainstream health and safety issue.

This view has since been endorsed by the Government’s Independent Work Related Road Safety Task Group which reported in November 2001 (The ‘Dykes Report’). The Health and Safety Executive are now committed to developing guidance - particularly on the implications for employers of the Management Regulations in relation to ‘at work’ driving in company cars and vans.

The gist of RoSPA’s approach (visit www.rospa.com and select ‘occupational safety’ and then ‘occupational road risk’) is that employers should be adapting their existing systems for managing health and safety to ensure that they have the policies, people and procedures in place to be able to manage road risk systematically. They should be devising safety interventions based on risk assessment and be monitoring and reviewing how effective these are so they can feed back lessons learned to secure a cycle of continuous improvement.

A major issue in developing this sort of systematic approach to managing occupational road risk (MORR) is that of gathering useful data - particularly on drivers, vehicles, journeys, crashes, causes, costs etc. RoSPA has advised that, as one element of such information gathering, employers should carry out checks on their employees’ driving licences, for example, at recruitment and at appropriate periods thereafter.

This is to enable managers to feed this information (together with other data such as crash records and mileage etc) into risk assessments. It can also be used to help monitor drivers’ behaviour and to identify possible needs for further driver training and support. For example, drivers accumulating enough penalty points to put them close to disqualification may be offered counselling and retraining to help them improve their behaviour and retain their licences.

Licence checks can also be used however in a disciplinary context. Some organisations, for example, are stipulating that, as part of their overall approach to MORR, their employees must obey road traffic law and that significant contraventions are likely to be regarded as ‘misconduct’. Gross offences, such as driving under the influence of alcohol and/or illegal drugs or ‘gross speeding’ might even be regarded as ‘gross misconduct’ in the context of ACAS guidance and warrant suspension from work pending an enquiry which, if it confirmed the offence, might lead to summary dismissal.

However, in order for employers to take this approach, it is important that requirements about safe driving are clearly included in contracts of employment otherwise employees might be able to claim successfully at an Employment Tribunal that an employer had acted against them unfairly.
Also, where companies provide company cars or cash allowances for cars, they may set down criteria about vehicle use, including not only how the vehicle is to be driven by the employee but whether spouses and others may use the vehicle.

But making driving behaviour part of the company’s overall approach to discipline is not without its difficulties.

Employees may resent the idea of their employer taking an interest in their driving behaviour, particularly outside working time and, in practice it is often difficult for the employer to assess whether some of the more common offences listed on licences (particularly speeding) were committed during working time or not.

The process of licence checking can be time consuming and the information gleaned may not be up-to-date. RoSPA has made suggestions to the DfT that arrangements should be put in place to enable employers to search the DVLA licence database via a secure Internet link (with the driver’s informal consent). Something like this exists at present as a fax back service to meet the needs of insurers in relation to the vehicle hire sector.

There is also the need to preserve confidentiality and Data Protection and Human Rights Legislation will undoubtedly have a bearing, for example on whether companies can or should seek to publish league tables.

Convictions for some of the more serious road traffic offences may also show up, for example, if the employer is entitled to apply for a Criminal Records Bureau investigation of a prospective employee. For instance, if that person is going to be responsible for driving vehicles to transport young people, perhaps this sort of disclosure is relevant.

There is also the problem that offences such as speeding are more heavily concentrated among drivers of higher powered saloon cars, which typically in a business will be driven by its more senior managers. In any even-handed company policy, senior managers (who in any case, should be leading the company’s policy via personal example) may feel particularly exposed. Does the company want to risk losing a valued senior employee because it starts to enquire more closely into aspects of that employee’s behaviour hitherto hidden from view?

The important principle in all this is that organisations will not make progress without securing employee commitment and buy-in. But both of those commodities are likely to be seriously compromised if the employer tries to influence behaviour via a heavy disciplinary route or via negative incentives. Better health and safety is something which you do with people and not to them. So the main emphasis has to be on consulting employees and their safety representatives about MORR plans.

In this way the employer stands a much better chance of creating a strong culture of safe driving at work, so that when really gross disciplinary issues arise in relation to driver behaviour, it is much more likely that everyone will agree that any resulting disciplinary action is necessary and fair.
September 2003

‘The breach and the observance’

The Government continue to look for community based solutions to fighting crime, particularly through schemes such as ‘Neighbourhood Watch; ‘Crimestoppers”; the appointment of Community Support Officers; the development of community policing generally and by continuing to forge links with Community Groups, schools etc. Notwithstanding the legitimacy of calls for increases in police resources, there is an increasing recognition that tackling crime needs to be addressed as a partnership between the community and the Police.

Most existing community policing effort seems to be directed against priority concerns such as burglary, car crime, vandalism, drug dealing and violence, particularly threats from illegally held firearms but it can also reach out to embrace other areas of crime such as fraud, major robberies and so on.

With many hundreds of lives lost and many more cases of serious disabling injury due to accidents resulting from road traffic law violations, it seems strange that involvement of the community in roads policing has been largely excluded from this wider approach. In part this could be because breaches of road traffic law are not widely perceived as criminal in nature when compared say with burglary or major theft; yet the toll of death and suffering, not to mention the cost to public funds from serious road traffic law violations is massive. More people lose their lives on the road as result of road traffic crime than are killed in the course of robberies or domestic violence.

While RoSPA and other road safety campaigners will continue to campaign for an increase in resources for road traffic policing and for this area of police work to be given higher priority by the Home Office, arguably it should also be putting forward ideas to help secure greater community involvement in road safety law enforcement and compliance. Some elements already exist:

- citizens are invited to phone ‘Crime Stoppers’ if they suspect someone may be driving while impaired through alcohol or taking drugs; and
- in some areas local authorities will provide and support local citizens in using ‘speed guns’ to monitor speeding motorists.

The time may now be right to start to examine options for enhancing vigilance and providing better feedback from drivers and other road users on serious cases of road traffic law breaking. This might on the face of it seem fraught with difficulties, including, for example:

- unsubstantiated allegations by officious, unaccountable members of the public about driver behaviour (potentially blackening the reputation of otherwise respectable citizens);
- masses of reports and paperwork; and
- additional work for and already overstretched police service.
On the other hand, if bringing about major changes in driver behaviour is the key to securing the Government’s ‘Tomorrow’s Roads’ casualty reduction targets, then peer pressure from fellow road users bearing down on unacceptable driver/rider behaviour has got to be seen as a major element of any broader road safety strategy. (This has certainly been an underpinning strategic assumption in efforts to change the social acceptability of drink driving.) Better arrangements to enable responsible drivers/riders and other road users to identify and report on problem drivers so that they can be counselled, retrained and, where necessary, prosecuted - have got to be examined as part of this process.

Already there are a variety of driver observation schemes operated either by special providers or by organisations themselves, inviting drivers to call a ‘freephone’ number if a company vehicle is being driven badly. There are some obvious road safety questions to be asked, including whether gathering information about an apparent violation and noting the number to be called does not lead the driver doing the reporting to become dangerously distracted. Organisations using such schemes however claim that they enhance their drivers’ sense of accountability on the road and that they also enable them to identify those who repeatedly are complained against. On their own they are certainly not an adequate response by employers to their duties to manage occupational road risk (MORR) but, where they are introduced as part of a wider MORR programme, they can provide a useful stream of reactive monitoring information for managers and other stakeholders.

There are a number of models which could be followed. ‘How’s my driving’ could be extended so that any road user could report bad or dangerous driving, for example, to central number or, better still, to a reporting framework on a widely publicised website. This would enable a data base of complaints to be built up to help inform RS and enforcement strategies generally but it might also lead to identification of persistent ‘offenders’ who might be counselled by the police and/or local authorities. Much might be learned in setting up such a scheme from research to examine the effectiveness and operation of existing ‘how’s my driving?’ schemes.

An alternative might be to seek to appoint community road safety behaviour ‘observers’ from among the ranks of drivers with proven safe driving records such as those having passed the RoSPA Advanced Test, ADIs, ex-Police road traffic patrol officers, Local Authority Road Safety Officers etc in order to build a cadre of people who could be trained to observe and report via the Internet in a more rigorous and disciplined fashion using an appropriate password. Indeed there could even be merit in badging such people and their vehicles to make them more visible on the road as one way of influencing driver/rider behaviour.

Many might argue that potential problems that could be foreseen with such a scheme might rule it out as impractical from the start. For example:

- not only might it be difficult to manage people working in a voluntary or semi voluntary capacity as ‘observers’ but problems arising from over-enthusiasm might cause them to overstep the mark;
- they might make unfounded allegations;
- there would be difficulties in them proving ‘wrong doing’ which they reported;
if they were visible through badging, this might increase their risk of being assaulted or their vehicles being vandalised; and

if they were badged or even known to be observers and their visible behaviour on the road fell below that which they expected others to exhibit, this could lead to a loss of credibility for the scheme.

These and other suggested drawbacks however would need to be tested in practice against evidence gathered in pilot schemes and cross-referencing to similar experience in established schemes such as ‘Neighbourhood Watch’. It could well be that while reporting to a central Internet database with a view to counselling persistent ‘offenders’ was found to be impractical, use of observers as ‘eyes and ears’ for the police could yield benefits in tackling not only road safety crime but crime in general. Such schemes would undoubtedly add to existing research data on driver behaviour. It might be found during trials that badging observer’s vehicles did not lead to any greater threat of violence and/or vandalism.

The key point here is that, given the apparent potential to involve more members of the community in efforts to improve road safety and bear down on criminally dangerous drivers, nothing should be ruled out a priori until it has been tested in practice.

Beyond bodies like, RoADA and Local Authority Road Safety Units one could even imagine insurers putting forward observers (trained reps out on the road in liveried vehicles) or indeed major commercial fleets offering the services of their trained drivers to come forward and participate in such a scheme. Major companies could well prove to be a particularly fruitful reservoir of volunteers given the growth of interest by organisations in MORR. A major insurer, for example, might be persuaded to launch a national version of ‘How’s my driving’ to gather information on drivers which might be used subsequently in setting premia. In any model however practical issues involved in identifying drivers from vehicle registrations would have to be overcome - although arguably much has been learned here from the operation of safety cameras.

There is of course in all this a fundamental objection (or at least a sense of unease) about the idea of one lot of citizens (holier than though?) watching, recording information about and informing on their neighbours. To some people this conjures up images of Stasi appointed informers in the old East Germany or at least loathsome images of the school sneak. The road is arguably one of the most private forms of public space and thus the social acceptability of any kind of community based road safety ‘observation’ programme would depend in large measure on the way it was rolled out and sold to the public. Potentially much could be learned here from use of ‘citizen reporting’ in other areas such as the Government’s ‘Benefit Fraud Hotline’ and voluntary sector schemes used to identify child abuse as well as in ‘whistle blowing’ procedures which are now an accepted part of good corporate governance in most major organisations.

In all these schemes there have been few objections raised in principle to the idea of citizens reporting on those suspected of serious offences and it appears that, on the whole, erroneous and or malicious reporting is not a major barrier to their effectiveness. On the other hand, if any similar scheme were introduced in the road
safety field, it would need to avoid being seen as focused primarily on enforcement, prosecution and securing greater revenue through fines and so on. Were this the perception it would undoubtedly be criticised as yet another form of ‘motorist oppression’ and would be politically very unattractive for this reason, particularly given the dominance of vehicle interests over those of other road users. On the other hand, if such a scheme were developed (initially at least) as a form of disciplined observation and liaison (much in the way ‘Neighbourhood Watch’ has) or indeed a much wider citizen reporting system, it might be seen as more socially acceptable, particularly if those appointed as observers at local level also took part in other road safety activities such as visits to schools, local initiatives etc.

As ever, the name given to any scheme would be vitally important from a presentational standpoint. ‘Road Safety Observer’, for example, would be likely to be seen as more threatening than ‘Road Safety Support Officer’. ‘Roadsafetywatch’ would be more appealing for a citizen based scheme than ‘Report-a-motorist’. Similarly, on the Internet www.drivingstandards.com might be seen as less pejorative than www.baddriving.com and so on.

Perhaps the simplest way forward might be for a local authority to pilot an citizen/Internet based bad road behaviour reporting scheme to be run alongside ‘Crimestoppers’. The results could then be evaluated to see whether such a scheme could be rolled out more widely or could be given a sharper focus by enrolling a cadre of more disciplined observers/reporters.

The ideas set out here are far from exhaustive and undoubtedly many more suggestions and ideas would emerge were RoSPA or other bodies in road safety to encourage a wider national debate. Many community based road safety schemes are already in existence and citizen based reporting is clearly becoming well established as a major element in many areas of crime prevention and has the potential not only to enhance intelligence about different areas of crime but to act as a general deterrent against wrong doing. The purpose of this article is simply to suggest that the debate needs to be developed in order to assess to the extent to which citizen involvement could become a much stronger feature of efforts to combat road safety crime.
‘The case for driver education’

A recent review of studies of the efficacy of driver education undertaken by Prof Ian Roberts of the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and others and published in The Cochrane Library has concluded that there is no evidence that extra education to people after they have passed their driving test prevents road traffic injuries or crashes. The reviewers pooled the data from 24 separate studies of driver education conducted over the last 40 years. Instead of investing in extra driver education, the authors recommend that companies who want to protect their staff should promote teleconferencing rather than traveling to meetings, eliminate unnecessary car journeys and, where possible, encourage the use of safer modes of transport such as the train. Professor Roberts says: "If you want to prevent road death, driver education is not the answer. All the education in the world won't change the fact that the traffic environment is dangerous. It makes more sense to work towards safer transport systems. We need less traffic in our towns and cities with more walking and cycling and better public transport. Driver education is big business - our results shows that it is also a big con."

RoSPA is presently considering the Review although at first glance the bulk of studies considered appear to be of remedial training following accidents and enforcement rather than advanced training.

Clearly, as Prof Roberts points out (and RoSPA has long advocated in its MORR guidance) driver training is at the bottom of the hierarchy of preferred options for risk control. Besides reducing exposure through journey elimination and modal shift, other possible risk control interventions include safe journey planning, providing safer vehicles and more general initiatives designed to raise awareness, change attitudes and create greater stakeholder accountability in relation to work related road safety. Prof Roberts’s findings once again raise the question for organisations of whether or not they might secure greater improvements in at-work road safety performance by spending their resources on things other than driver training.

When considering the extent to which the accident risk associated with driving can be reduced through changes in attitudes/skills/behaviour skill, it would seem important to establish the extent to which such risk is purely stochastic and conversely the extent to which it can be modified by drivers’ ability to avoid/cope with error/consequences. Although more data are needed on the characteristics of high and low risk driver groups, it seems clear, for example, that older, more experienced drivers/riders have a crash liability of between a quarter and a third that of novice drivers. To some extent this effect might be explained by older drivers being a ‘survivor population’ (the ‘less able’ are less able to cope and thus succumb at a higher rate than the ‘more able’). On the other hand it seems reasonable to assume that, beyond the test, drivers learn (mainly through practice and experience) to enhance the attitudes and skills they need to avoid crashing. It would seem wholly counter-intuitive to have to conclude from the Roberts study that training prior to test was influential while post test training was not.

Road crashes are usually complex events with many immediate and underlying causal factors - typically presenting as a combination of road user errors, deficiencies in the
road environment and vehicle defects (the latter however now accounting for quite a small proportion of overall causations).

Road safety depends on road users ensuring consistently that their position and speed enable them to maintain a safe separation between themselves and others and/or hazardous features of the road environment. Key skills involve being able to gather and correctly analyse information from the road environment and being able to anticipate and respond defensively to the errors of other road users.

In most crashes driver errors are a significant cause, including a) slips and lapses, b) mistakes and c) violations.

Typical **slips and lapses** can include distraction and consequent failure to observe and interpret the road environment correctly as well as inadvertent but inappropriate operation of vehicle controls (e.g. hitting the accelerator instead of the brakes). (An increased tendency to slips and lapses may also be linked to impairment factors such as fatigue, stress, various ill health conditions, visual and cognitive defects and the influence of alcohol and/or drugs.)

**Mistakes** can be skill or rule based, for example failing to interpret road conditions effectively or to control the vehicle successfully (skill based) or applying the wrong rule for a given situation (rule based) - even if for the right reason. (Again, impairment factors can have a significant influence here too.)

**Violations** may be ‘routine’, ‘exceptional’ or ‘situational’ and include deliberate rule breaking (e.g. speeding, jumping red lights, cutting corners, blind overtaking) even though drivers concerned may feel that they have justifiable reasons for doing so. (Violations narrow time and space margins available to enable drivers to cope with the consequences of other forms of error, whether committed by themselves and/or other road users.)

More work may be needed to classify the error types (and combinations of types) found in typical road crashes and to assess from these data the possibility and probability of preventing each through various interventions, including particular training techniques.

The Health and Safety Executive’s guidance on human factors (HSG48) suggests that slips and lapses are unlikely to be addressed successfully by training. Other strategies need to be pursued here such reducing distraction and impairment factors generally. Mistakes may be addressed by improving knowledge and skills. Violations may be addressed by changing attitudes and removing the desire and/or need to violate.

Drivers clearly have a variety of development needs, particularly in relation to reducing mistakes and violations.

There is a wide variety of forms of driver training and such training is delivered in a range of contexts, for example, following accidents and/or enforcement and routinely as part of vocational training. The majority of providers continue to focus on knowledge and skills development whereas much accident experience suggests that the main issue to be addressed is ‘attitude’.
A model for driver training might be developed as follows:

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<th>(1) INPUTS</th>
<th>(2) OUTPUTS</th>
<th>(3) OUTCOMES</th>
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<tr>
<td>Training:</td>
<td>• reduced aggression</td>
<td>• more consistent TUG information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• attitudes</td>
<td>• better RS knowledge</td>
<td>• more consistent space management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• knowledge</td>
<td>• improved observation,</td>
<td>• reduced mistakes</td>
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<tr>
<td>• skills</td>
<td>• improved control</td>
<td>• reduced violations</td>
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<td>skills, better decision</td>
<td>• fewer near misses</td>
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<td></td>
<td>making, (speed,</td>
<td>• fewer crashes,</td>
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<td></td>
<td>position, gear,</td>
<td>damage, injuries etc</td>
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<td></td>
<td>acceleration etc)</td>
<td>• reduced enforcement</td>
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</tbody>
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Most research designed to assessing the efficacy of driver training aims to test relationships between levels 1 and 3 whereas a more fruitful approach might be to research links between levels 1 and 2. The most traditional approach is to use a control group to see whether training seems to make any difference to the crash rate of trained drivers. In practice this is fraught with methodological difficulties (changes in crash rates can have many causes), although it is undoubtedly still worth looking for a ‘training effect’ by comparing crash involvement in populations of trained and untrained drivers undertaking similar journey tasks. Also, where training approaches have been tailored to individual driver needs via assessment, it should be possible to undertake ‘before and after’ case study analysis to see if and to what extent these have contributed to sustained improvements in assessed deficits in individuals’ knowledge, skills and attitudes. (Changes in hazard recognition skills can be tracked, for example.) The same approach could be repeated for larger populations using a control group or on a ‘before and after’ basis.

Also, where training approaches aim to change attitudes and reduce the frequency and/or seriousness of violations, it may be possible to test attitudes on a ‘before and after’ basis and/or to track indicators of violating behaviour (such as over-speeding tracked via ‘black box technologies’ or the rate of SP penalty points) in trained and untrained matched driver populations.

There is clearly still a huge research agenda here and thus there is also a very real danger (particularly given the mystique that surrounds the ‘Cochrane brand’) that the Roberts Review may be seen as a drawing a line under the case for further research into the effectiveness or otherwise of advanced driver training. Clearly driving is a learned skill and while some fraction of the associated accident risk is random, any individual’s liability to be crash involved can be greatly modified by their overall level of knowledge and skill not to mention their attitude to driving. Key questions to be addressed include: how it is that drivers continue to learn beyond the test; to what extent such processes can be enhanced or accelerated through training; which elements are most open to modification; and which approaches are most successful and why. Looking through the window provided by individual crash investigation it seems clear that most crashes are avoidable but in practice some types may be easier to prevent than others. Given a certain pattern of crash types and causations in a fleet,
how could research help to better assess the margins available for crash reduction, for example by tailoring training and other approaches to help address the most significant causes and to target and optimise safety and prevention spend generally? Certainly, when prescribing driver training solutions for clients, besides assessing the training and development needs of individuals, training providers need to make an assessment of the most prevalent crash and error types in the fleet concerned and discuss with stakeholders how these might best be addressed by tailoring training strategies and approaches to be adopted.

Professor Roberts is quite right to highlight the fact that by 2020 road traffic injuries will be the third largest cause of 'disease' in the world and that currently over a million people are killed each year around the world by road traffic crashes and ten million more are permanently disabled. Similarly his call for people to get off the road and to ‘let technology and trains take the strain’ chimes with current debates about sustainability. On the other hand, in the medium term at least, the number of people exposed to the risk of road accidents (including vulnerable road users not protected by seat belts and air bags) will continue to increase. In this context his call ‘Don't bother with extra driver education’ is not only superficial but cavalier if not highly irresponsible. In advanced countries particularly, it is widely accepted that the contributions to improved road safety from improved vehicle and highway engineering are beginning to reach their limits. Further reductions can mainly be won through modifying driver behaviours and enhancing drivers’ capacity to cope safely in the road environment. Rather than dismissing the case for driver education altogether, surely he should be suggesting the need for further research to help trainers and others understand better just how driver’s develop in practice and how training and other interventions might help to supplement this?
May 2004

‘Meeting without moving’

As readers of this column will know, RoSPA is continuing to press the Health and Safety Commission (HSC) to give higher priority to work related road safety in their strategy up to 2010 and beyond. We all need to keep reminding HSC/E that up to 20 people are killed and 250 are seriously injured in ‘at-work’ road crashes every week. (This compares to less than 7 fatal injuries in work related accidents which are reportable by law to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and Local Authorities (LAs).) At the average risk of dying in a car crash, those who travel 25,000 miles a year in the course of their work face a risk of fatality at work equivalent to that faced by those employed in high hazard industries such as agriculture, quarrying or construction. In reality the true level of risk for at-work drivers is likely to be even higher. Research by TRL shows that company car drivers have a 40 per cent higher risk of crashing and their injuries are correspondingly worse. The human and financial costs or work related road crashes to families, businesses and the wider community are massive. A fatal crash in total costs businesses, families and the wider community just over £1 million.

Last September, in the light of the report of the Government’s independent, Work Related Road Safety Task Group (the Dykes Committee) (http://www.hse.gov.uk/roadsafety/traffic1.pdf), the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and the Department for Transport (DfT) published their long awaited joint guidance, ‘Driving at Work’ (http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg382.pdf) showing how employers need to manage risk on the road as a mainstream health and safety issue. Essentially this means organisations need to:

- communicate clear messages to their staff about their approach to road safety;
- set up systems and allocate duties to key members of staff (particularly managers);
- carry out ‘suitable and sufficient’ risk assessments,
- use these to check that they are doing all that is ‘reasonably practicable’ to avoid risk on the road or to ensure safe driving,
- provide driver training where necessary, and
- monitor and review performance.

In September RoSPA also launched an expanded version of its own guidance on managing occupational road risk (MORR) which it first launched in 1998 - visit www.morr.org.uk. While much of the content of both the HSE/DfT and RoSPA guides focuses on practical steps needed to ensure: safe journey plans, safe vehicles and safe drivers, it needs to be remembered that, top of the list of possible risk reduction measures is the need for employers to avoid requiring employees to travel by road where this clearly unnecessary. For example, it may be possible to travel by safer modes such as train or plane, especially where long distances are involved; or, better still, avoid the need to travel at all by using telephone, Internet or video conferencing links.
‘Driving at work’, ‘Steps to Risk Assessment’ (Step three, page 9) says ‘Ask yourself whether you can eliminate the hazard, e.g. by holding a telephone or video-conference instead of making people travel to a meeting. If not, you should think about how to control the risk,...’

Up to now, while it has offered general advice about avoiding unnecessary business travel by road wherever possible, RoSPA has done little work to explore this option in any detail. There are signs however that the workforce in becoming increasingly mobile. Research by Professor Steve Stradling of Napier University suggests that 75 per cent of men and 49 per cent of women employed in manufacturing in England are required to drive a vehicle (usually their own) at some point in the course of their work. Time spent driving not only increases the chances of crashing; it can also exacerbate musculo-skeletal injuries (low back pain) and contribute to work related stress, the two biggest sources of lost working days.

The advice in ‘Driving at Work’ on avoiding the need to travel by road wherever possible needs to be understood in the context of the duties contained in the Management of Health and Safety at Work (MHSW) Regulations. These require employers to adopt preventive and protective measures on the basis of the ‘principles of prevention’ set out in Schedule One to the Regulations, sub section (a) of which is ‘avoiding risks’. Guidance to the regulations (para 30) advises employers: ‘...if possible avoid a risk altogether, e.g. do the work in a different way, taking care not to introduce new hazards;...’. Para 31 points out ‘These are general principles rather than individual prescriptive requirements. They should however be applied wherever it is reasonable to do so.’

In practice the extent to which HSE will expect employers to avoid a risk as opposed to controlling it (for example, substituting a toxic substance with a non-toxic one rather than just providing barrier controls and/or ventilation) depends on whatever is taken to be ‘good practice’ in the sector concerned. The extent therefore to which opting for ‘meeting without moving’ (MWM), for example, can be held to be a legal requirement under health and safety law depends a) on showing the reasonableness of such an approach and b) on gaining acceptance that it is ‘good practice’.

At present it is important to stress that the advice in ‘Driving at work’ on avoiding unnecessary travel by road does not mean that HSE and Local Authorities will be using their enforcement powers to compel employers to avoid sending employees out onto the public highway. (HSE have in any case said in the guidance that enforcing work related road safety is currently not one of their priorities. The police will continue to take the enforcement lead at the scene of road crashes but conceivably they may in future enquire more closely into whether the journeys of those involved in work related road accidents were really necessary, for example, if they were only going to a routine meeting.)

On the other hand it is entirely feasible that employees seeking damages under common law for injuries sustained in work related road crashes might seek to demonstrate employer liability in cases where their journey was clearly not necessary. Remember, the burden of proof in such cases is lower than in prosecutions under the criminal law and all that it might be necessary for the claimant to establish was that
she/he did not need to be on the road because alternative and safer means of communication were readily available.)

One of the problems here is that so many of us accept unquestioningly that travel to meetings is a normal and an inevitable part of daily working life, even when we spend hours stuck in endless motorway traffic jams! Partly this may be explained by lack of familiarity with alternatives such as video-conferencing (VC) or an innate mistrust of technology. Securing greater use of VC however is not so much a technological issue as a cultural one. The technology is now very good but many organisations which are ‘video enabled’ still fail to make effective use of it. We need to see VC not so much as a technology but more as a communications medium requiring behavioural change. Unless the most advantageous climate can be created for such change, both within individual businesses and in Society generally, sustained usage will not occur. VC users need to be informed, educated, encouraged and positively motivated to use the medium and UK business needs to find new ways of persuading individuals and organisations to change their expectations about the need for business travel in the wider context of business communications. There is a whole host of reasons why organisations should try to expand use of video links, including: saving time and money; facilitating new individual and corporate communication opportunities, thus improving competitiveness; helping to reduce stress connected with work; and it helping to improve work/life balance. From a societal perspective greater use of VC could reduce the environmental impact of road transport; and it obviously has a significant role to play in helping to reduce transport congestion. But perhaps one of the least well understood reasons why we should be getting more enthused about VC is the contribution which it can make to reducing road risk, crashes, casualties and associated costs.

There is a whole range of Government Departments which should be engaged in ‘joined up government’ to promote VC: not just the Department of Work and Pensions, the HSE and the DT but the Department of Trade and Industry (on both the competitiveness and work life balance fronts), the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and so on. Outside Government, focussing on VC and MWM in general should be a key issue not only for the Trades Union Congress, the Confederation of British Industry, the Institute of Directors, and the Federation of Small Businesses etc., it should also be of major interest to the various road safety charities, the Friends of the Earth, Transport 2000 and organisations such as the Work Foundation.

What this confirms, as in other areas of H&S, is that realising the safety gains that are likely to available from changed ways of working is most likely to be possible by working in concert with others.

In the occupational road safety field we need to move beyond driver training as the sole solution and promote a debate on the kinds of steps which could be taken to promote MWM.

Should we be trying, for example, to persuade nationally recognised, high profile figures to supply statements in support of MWM, stressing the potential road safety and stress reduction gains? Should we be trying to identify MWM organisations and persuade them to put informative hyperlinks on their websites so that they can demonstrate the resulting business, safety and environmental benefits and the steps
they took to achieve them? Should we trying to show how MWM links with Corporate Social Responsibility? A web page which quoted and/or linked to all the relevant bits of official guidance, signposting the case for MWM, could be useful - and clearly all MWM advocates need to be seen to maximising its advantages in their own organisations. Greater coverage of MWM in business programmes and in TV features and drama could do a lot to emphasise it as a commonplace in current business practice.

There is a clear need for robust macro and micro estimates of the savings to both UK PLC and individual companies of a significant increase in the use of MWM as well as research into ‘drivers’ and ‘barriers’ in this area. We need to feed in these kinds of estimate to the forthcoming review of the D/T UK Road Safety Strategy. (We need a reliable estimate of the numbers of lives and injuries that could be saved by a realistic growth in this sort of approach over the next five years.)

Other options might include: asking more piercing questions about MWM policies and performance during ISO 14000 accreditation; and pressing Government Departments and Agencies (which themselves are being pressed by Ministers to be exemplars on H&S and Environment etc.) to: a) emphasise MWM as a key step; b) set some targets; and c) report periodically on progress. There may even be a case for using various tax regimes to help realise the macro/societal benefits of MWM (although the Treasury could be expected to demand that such an approach was fiscally neutral!).

RoSPA would like to help create a critical mass of key stakeholders and interest groups committed to extending use of MWM. It might be possible, for example, to conceive of an MWM Alliance (a possible model for this exists in the ‘Occupational Road Safety Alliance’ - visit www.orsa.org.uk).

Telephone, Internet and video conferencing will obviously not substitute for all meetings related business travel. People still need to meet at first hand. On the other hand, next time you are stuck in a jam on the M6 on your way to meet with colleagues you have seen many times before, ask yourself why you are not doing the meeting via video link. And if you are a safety adviser, remember, you do not have to produce bundles of research evidence to show that this kind of intervention works. If you are not on the road, you can’t crash. But you will need to ensure, of course, especially in today’s health conscious environment, that not all the time you save is spent sitting in front of a screen. Use it to get up and go for a good walk or get down to the gym. It beats driving any day!

Send your comments to me here at RoSPA at rbibbings@rospa.com.
Driving is the most dangerous work activity that most people do. About 20 people are killed and 250 seriously injured every week in crashes involving someone who was driving, riding or otherwise using the road for work purposes. With these figures in mind, RoSPA’s occupational safety adviser, Roger Bibbings, considers the benefits of regular driver/vehicle document checks for both employers and employees.

At RoSPA, we are getting a lot of enquiries about the regime which employers need to put in place for checking driver and vehicle documentation when employees are using their own vehicles for work purposes. (This is encouraging in a way since it shows how Managing Occupational Road Risk (MORR) continues to climb up the health and safety agenda.)

While it is not stated explicitly in either road traffic or health and safety law that employers should check appropriate documents (to ensure that employee owned vehicles which their employees drive in the course of their work are suitable for the purpose and are properly maintained), there is an implicit legal requirement that they should take reasonable steps to reassure themselves about these matters. (Guidance from RoSPA on this subject is set out in our online document Driving for work: own vehicles, www.rospa.com/roadsafety/info/ownvehicle.pdf)

If an accident were to occur in working time because a vehicle was not suitable or was unfit, the employer might conceivably be accused of having caused or permitted this. (Vehicles may also perhaps be considered as work equipment under the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations which require risk assessment, maintenance and checking – but in practice this law is HSE/Local Authority enforced mainly in relation to dedicated site vehicles rather than road vehicles.)

Also of course, insurers may place requirements on employers which cause them to look at these issues.

All this suggests that, in addition to checking driving licences (not just to check entitlement to drive but as part of risk assessment and performance monitoring, for example), employers increasingly will be asking employees if they have a current MOT, appropriate service records, proof of vehicle ownership and business class insurance etc.

Employers may ask staff just to provide basic data or to produce actual documents for inspection. They may also be asking them for additional health information.

Documentation

In the absence of explicit requirements in regulations it is very difficult to say in any particular set of circumstances where ‘reasonable action’ to meet general legal requirements of this sort ends and ‘good practice’ begins.

Although it may be quite time consuming to require employees to produce such documentation in the form of original hard copy, this might not be unreasonable if the employer wants an assurance that vehicles are suitable and road legal.

The MOT system and regular servicing should help ensure that the vehicle is in a roadworthy condition but employees obviously also need to be reminded about the importance of carrying out daily and weekly vehicle checks (oil, water, lights, tyres, windscreen etc). (Whether or not this in turn is recorded again is very much a judgement call for the employer.)

Whatever view is taken about the need to scrutinise the vehicle documentation, the driver licence information, I would suggest, is really very important and thus licences should be checked periodically and employees required to inform the employer promptly about penalty points or bans etc.

There are just too many cases where employees are disqualified from driving and do not tell their employer. On occasions they end up driving illegally and the employer can also be liable to prosecution if they cannot show that they have a way of checking entitlement to drive.

Although it might appear that the employer is prying into something that is confidential (no one likes to own up to having points), in practice, it is very much to the employee’s advantage since, by getting further training they have the chance of improving their driving skills, remaining on the right side of the law and keeping their job!
Parting Shots

The costs involved in document checking on the other hand have to be considered as part of any overall cost benefit analysis of the ‘at-work’ driving – ‘safety case’, i.e. the costs in time and trouble etc versus the actual contribution which checking makes to reducing crash risk.

Employers who do not want to bear the costs of checking every document in detail may simply choose to ask employees to sign to say that they have this documentation or they may just remind them that such documentation may be checked on a random sample basis from time to time.

On the other hand the administrative burden can be lightened considerably in practice by the use of appropriate networked software.

The Fleet Support Group, with which RoSPA works closely, has developed an IT package (Riskmaster, see: www.fsguk.com/products/riskmaster) – in which data from driver and vehicle documentation are combined with the results of a RoSPA online driver assessment (Driver Profiler, see: www.rospa.com/drivertraining/managementinfo/driverprofiler.htm) and mileage data to help decide if a driver can be issued with a ‘Permit to Drive’ or whether they need further training.

Commuting

There is also the question of employees using their own vehicles for commuting and exactly where commuting ends and ‘mission’ journeys start.

From a legal perspective it is generally accepted that employers’ duties of care extend to driving in working time and do not include commuting.

On the other hand the recent ‘Produce Connection case’ in which a young man was tragically killed while travelling home in a fatigue-related accident after working grossly excessive hours, has shown how employers may have a legal interest in this angle too.

The Produce Connection, a potato firm based in Cambridgeshire, was fined £30,000 after one of its workers, Mark Fiebig, 21, died when his van drifted into the path of a lorry on the A10 near Ely in 2002. He was driving home after a third consecutive shift of nearly 20 hours.

Cambridge Crown Court heard that Mr Fiebig was thought to be suffering from “chronic fatigue” and had fallen asleep at the wheel.

Prosecutor Pascal Bates said Mr Fiebig had worked 11 days without a day off prior to his fatal crash. During that time he had worked on average 17 hours a day and was getting three to four hours sleep a night.

Mr Bates said other staff were working similarly long hours and added the farm manager “had to be aware, and so did other management”, because “Workers were paid by the hour. For payroll purposes a daily note was kept of each worker’s working hour”.

The company admitted failing to ensure the health of workers and the public.

The case is thought to be the first of its kind in the UK because the company admitted breaching health and safety legislation, even though Mr Fiebig died outside working hours.

But the question of what actually constitutes commuting is not an easy one.

In the government’s ‘Work-Related Road Safety Task Group’ it was agreed that it encompassed travelling from home to a normal workplace and back but that travelling elsewhere from home might be considered as a ‘mission’ journey and thus duties of care would start from the home as it were.

Sometimes of course employees have several ‘normal’ places of work (teachers going to several schools, for example) but from a strictly legal perspective the idea is that the employer should be able to differentiate between these and exceptional journeys starting from home.

From a humanitarian and ‘business case’ point of view however (as opposed to a purely legal one) we in RoSPA encourage employers to address commuting safety.

But this is very much about encouraging safe practice rather than laying down hard and fast requirements.

On the other hand, if a company owned vehicle is being used for commuting the employer might legitimately set some tougher parameters about safety.

Vehicles

But problems can also arise when employers start to specify minimum requirements for employees’ own vehicles for safety reasons. In general we caution against being too stringent in this area since in practice the main focus for safety needs to be on good journey planning, driver fitness, avoidance of distractions, fatigue etc and safe driving.

Additional vehicle specs like higher NCAP ratings (visit: www.euroncap.com), for example, may add something to the safety case for the employee driver/passenger but little, for example, for vulnerable road users.

Also, some employees may choose to use Powered Two Wheelers for work journeys. On occasions employers may object to this on safety grounds. In RoSPA’s opinion, use of PTWs at work should not automatically be banned but, besides the issues which apply to safe ‘at-work’ vehicle use generally, employers should perhaps seek a suitable assessment of riding ability, set some standards for Personal Protective Equipment and some limits as to when PTWs can be used safely (fog, ice, high winds etc).

The main thing to bear in mind in all this however is that vehicle safety is only one of the safety critical issues that have to be considered in reducing the risk of at-work crashes. Vehicle defects account for less than 5% of primary causation in all serious road crashes. Safe journey plans (see RoSPA’s online Safer Journey Planner at: www.rospa.org.uk/roadsafety) and driver competence are in many ways far more important.

Many regard document checking simply as an exercise in employers covering liability but it may add some safety value in its own right (for example, by providing performance information for managers).

And there is another aspect of all this which is perhaps worth mentioning. That is that by requiring employees to furnish this sort of data, employers are helping to underpin the importance which they attach to the whole question of work-related road safety – and this in turn can help to support a positive road safety culture in the business.

In this context it is also very important of course that necessary work-related road safety measures have ‘employee buy-in’.

Sitting alongside their duties to assess and manage health and safety risks, employers have a duty under H&S law to consult with staff and their representatives.

Safety has to be a joint effort and it is important that employees have the opportunity to comment on and contribute to policies, organisation and arrangements designed to ensure their own safety and that of others.

As usual, readers’ views are welcome.

Email: rbibbings@rospa.com
Managing occupational road risk has become the number one safety priority in most large organisations, however, there are still countless workers whose safety is at risk because their employers have not got to grips with this vital issue. Roger Bibbings, RoSPA’s occupational safety adviser, asks what further steps should and could be taken to embed management of occupational road risk in these businesses.

Although precise data are still not available it is estimated that over 1,000 people die annually in work-related road accidents compared with about 240 who die in ‘conventional’ work accidents which are notifiable to HSE and local authorities. As road mobility of the workforce continues to grow in an increasingly serviced-based economy, managing occupational road risk – or MORR (a concept pioneered by RoSPA since the mid 1990s) – has become the number one safety priority in most large organisations.

The whole issue is now embraced enthusiastically by the Department for Transport who see it as an important strand in reducing UK road casualties. In 2004, together with the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) they published new guidance Driving for Work (INDG 382), making it clear that risk on the road while at work should be managed within the framework of duties set out in the Health and Safety at Work Act and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations.

Enforcement

HSE have been wary about the enforcement implications however – particularly given their existing workload, and they have been at pains to point out that they are not the main reactive enforcers since it is the police who remain in the lead at the scene of road crashes. But better liaison between HSE and the police has resulted in more probing questions being asked about journey purpose by police officers to see if management issues may have contributed to crashes where drivers were at work.

The Health and Safety Commission (HSC) has not conceded the case for making work-related road injuries (WoRRIs) reportable under the Reporting of Injury Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR) but HSE has now agreed to include INDG382 in their new ‘Route Map’ for work-related transport, signifying a new commitment by inspectors on the ground to raise the issues involved during visits to employers.

In the wider market place there has also been a good deal of activity. There has been the production of much guidance and there are numerous websites covering aspects of work-related road safety (WRRS). Besides RoSPA’s MORR, the RoSPA guide (and associated downloadable guidance for employers on issues such as fatigue, drink and drugs, own vehicle use etc accessible via: www.rospa.com/roadsafety) there is a whole host of other resources available from bodies such as LARSOA and BRAKE.
Regulation

The whole subject of MORR has now clearly come of age but it is equally clear that it is still not reaching those in many parts of the economy who are under increasing pressure when they are out on the road for work purposes. Whether it is ‘dot com’ delivery drivers struggling to meet targets or service engineers having to meet guaranteed call out times over ever wider areas, or the over stressed motorcycle courier or pizza delivery rider – there are countless workers whose safety is at risk (and who may be putting others in danger too) because their employers have not got to grips with this vital issue.

What further steps therefore should or could be taken to embed MORR in businesses that are still not taking road safety as seriously as they should?

When this whole issue was first discussed in the government’s Work-Related Road Safety Task Group, RoSPA took the view that the HSW Act and the MHSW Regulations, coupled with good official guidance, were all that was needed. Yet, for those businesses that are ‘law led’ rather than being proactive, there may well be a case for now introducing the Health and Safety (Driving for Work) Regulations. This would obviously raise issues about ‘regulatory burdens’, particularly for SMEs, but any accompanying cost benefit analysis ought to be able to show the massive safety gains and cost savings that such a measure could achieve.

There is still a very strong view that MORR should be included in RIDDOR, although HSC has decided to shelve any revision of these regulations for the time being, and not just in relation to the road. Exemplary enforcement clearly has a part to play, indicating corporate or individual behaviours that cross ‘a line in the sand’ and will not be tolerated. There may be a case for prosecutions of managers under the law on manslaughter or of organisations under the new offence of corporate manslaughter. Senior managers too may face prosecution together with their organisation under Section 27 of the HSW Act.

But to really bring H&S law to bear it may be that HSW Act enforcement powers need to be extended to police forces (as is currently being tried in Greater London). There may also need to be more web-based naming and shaming following prosecutions or the issuing of enforcement notices.

Should driving for work be acknowledged as a clear vocational skill in the context of skills training? A driving licence is now a requirement for so many jobs and, despite what may be said about the desirability of people using public transport, it extends travel to work distances and thus employability possibilities. (For disadvantaged young people, learning to drive through work could be a very useful way of embedding the right attitudes and tackling young driver safety problems.)

Going further than this, should there be a vocational driving licence for certain kinds of driver such as company reps or longer distance van drivers etc.? (Testing here could focus on the additional knowledge and skills required of such drivers.)

Linked to this should there be more specialist courses and qualifications, for example, for managers and not just drivers? Should there be a specialists group for relevant professionals?

For organisations, should there be a safety management standard for MORR like OHSAS 18001 to show their stakeholders that they had all the elements in place to deliver MORR systematically. RoSPA consulted recently on such an idea but with few responses so far. Or alternatively should an MORR element be inserted into existing schemes or into proprietary H&S auditing packages?

Should major players be urged to include MORR in pre-qualification assessment of their potential contractors and suppliers as part of procurement policies? (There has been interesting guidance developed here by the Office of Government Commerce – see: www.ogc.gov.uk)

There has been a significant expansion in research activity around MORR but how can this be shared and how can unmet research needs be identified?

New technologies have a significant contribution to make, for example, in driver performance monitoring and encouraging fuel-efficient driving. How can these be brought forward and their adoption encouraged?

Whatever actions on the above lines are pursued there is clearly massive scope for expanding promotion of WRRs by whole range of players including: local authorities, insurers and brokers, trade associations, trade unions and safety representatives, police forces, road safety charities, vehicle suppliers, local groups and so on. There is also scope for using achievement awards and press coverage to demonstrate and commend excellence as well as ‘the art of the possible’.

Reporting

RoSPA has been arguing for organisations to include data on their MORR policies, targets and performance in their annual reports and on their websites. By linking these through portals such as www.gopop.org.uk there is massive scope to spread good practice, for example, via the ‘Government Setting an Example’ programme which addresses employment and other practices in the government service. Besides those run by RoSPA and ORSA there are several other very useful websites such as DFT’s (www.dft.gov.uk/drivingforwork) and HSE’s WRRS web pages (www.hse.gov.uk/roadsafety). There are many options to be discussed but two conclusions can already be safely drawn:

mostly, that adopting a low-key awareness raising approach is unlikely to engage those organisations that may still be sceptical or worse still are prepared to go on exposing their drivers to unnecessary risks;

secondly, that there is no silver bullet – no single solution that will produce a further upwards change of gear on this vital issue. It has to be about getting the balance right between motivational factors and engagement.

For MORR information, see: www.rospa.com/morr

Readers’ views welcome.

Email: rbibbings@rospa.com
Earlier this year, I attended the first world conference on work-related road safety held in Washington. It was organised by the US National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) and attracted 220 delegates from 44 countries.

Not only was the preparation and organisation of the 2½ day event superb but it was an extremely important initiative, bringing together key players from around the world to share knowledge and help ensure that action to tackle road safety at work becomes a major thread in wider strategies being developed at an international level for cutting the massive, worldwide road casualty toll.

I had been asked to present a paper on the work we have been engaged on here in the UK for the last twelve years, and in particular the UK's experience in getting risk on the road integrated within mainstream health and safety. The key point that I sought to get across was that the risks that workers face (and which they can create for others) while on the road as part of their job need to be addressed by employers, regulators and others within the framework that should already be in place for managing other aspects of workplace health and safety.

I was able to explain the main landmarks in the campaign we in RoSPA have undertaken since 1996 on this issue – from the first RoSPA seminars in the late 1990s through the Dykes Committee to the HSE/DfT guidance (INDG382) in 2003 – to parliametary recommendations and to new initiatives such as ‘Driving for Better Business’ (DFBB).

Managing Occupational Road Risk (MORR) is now becoming a major focus of health and safety effort in the developed world as well as in many low and middle income countries where road casualty rates are much higher than here in the UK. It was very gratifying therefore to see the extent to which our core approach based on a ‘plan, do, check, act’ management model, informed by risk assessment, is being embraced in so many countries.

Attitudes

It was encouraging also to see that MORR is now being taken up at a global level, including within wider UN, WHO, Global Road Safety Partnership (www.grsroadssafety.org) etc strategies for road safety. With growing motorisation, for example, in countries such as India and China, road crashes are set to be the eighth biggest cause of death, equalling TB and malaria, costing three per cent of world GDP and becoming the biggest cause of lost life years for young men.

As the next step in the UN strategy there is to be a major UN organised meeting of road safety ministers in November in Russia. It seems clear that, as a result of the NIOSH conference, MORR will be a major theme in this event too since in many countries which lack a developed road safety infrastructure, action around road casualty reduction at enterprise level is a potentially powerful way to influence attitudes and behaviours.

Washington was still buzzing from the Obama inauguration when the conference took place in February and, although NIOSH has been active on work-related road safety for a number of years, in many ways the conference seemed to herald the new style of leadership on international issues that is promised under the Obama presidency.

There was a significant UK presence at the conference, including over 40 UK nationals in various guises. Besides road safety professionals from different countries, there was major input by several major corporates committed to road safety as part of their global CSR agendas – although this was not balanced by involvement of the international trade union movement (there was only one US union delegate who was from the Teamsters).

I was also a little concerned that there was insufficient representation from the EU. There was nothing from France, Germany, Spain, Italy, Finland or Austria, for example, where we know a lot is going on. The Bilbao Agency was represented but they seemed to be limiting their input to the health and safety of workers in the transport sector as opposed to the very much bigger issue of safety of daily car and light commercial vehicle drivers.
vehicle use by millions of workers who have to be road mobile to do their jobs, particularly in increasingly service-based economies.

The background research for the conference was carried out by the UK’s Dr Will Murray who produced a very comprehensive White Paper (I encourage colleagues to look at this at: www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/motorvehicle). I have already contributed quite a few comments and suggestions on the current draft, since clearly one of the key tasks arising from the conference is the need to create as full a map as possible of worldwide activity and resources. Will Murray and I have also said that we will undertake to contact colleagues in other EU Member States who are working on this issue — but who were not at the conference — to suggest they became part of the international coalition that is emerging on MORR.

**ORSA**

As part of my presentation I reported on how RoSPA had helped to establish the Occupational Road Safety Alliance (www.orsa.org.uk), not only to build links and share knowledge within the UK, but to help demonstrate to key policymakers and government the extent of stakeholder support for this agenda.

I have suggested to senior colleagues at NIOSH that there is now a strong case for a similarly broad but very visible coalition at an international level to help convince key communicators and decision makers of the extent to which action in the workplace can cut road casualties and the suffering and waste which they cause.

The conference discussed a wide range of instruments and initiatives which can be put in place at various levels — enterprise, community, sector, regional, national and global — to raise awareness and promote a systematic management approach. In this context, I learned that there is to be an International Management Standard via ISO. The UK will be able to influence this via BSI. It is very important that any new management standard for work-related road safety is congruent (and resonates) with other management standards dealing with quality, environment and health and safety (OSHAS) generally. At the same time it needs to be flexible enough to meet the needs of different organizations, including small and medium size enterprises.

If the momentum of the conference is to be maintained, there will need to be further meetings of key stakeholders and national contributors within the next two years to review progress and to refocus energy and commitment. In the meantime, however, NIOSH has said that it will use new and emerging media to encourage dialogue and collaboration, including a new area in Wikipedia (visit: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Global_road_safety_for_workers). (The new management standard might present an excellent opportunity in this context to get people to interact with this medium.)

The conference was also a very useful opportunity to reflect on the next steps here in the UK on MORR. We have established a bridgehead on the issue in many larger private and public sector bodies but many smaller firms have yet to wake up and see the really strong business case for cutting at-work crashes.

We have just held a meeting of ORSA members to help clarify its relationship to ‘Driving for Better Business’. There is also a need to ‘mind map’ the MORR model and all associated management tools/techniques to see how all these link together in an overall jigsaw (eg. ‘driver profiling’, ‘real time driver feedback technologies’). There are exciting opportunities with work such as RoSPA’s Young Drivers at Work project (see RoSPA News page 15) to use the workplace to influence young workers at the start of their driving careers.

**Action**

There are many links to be built. Besides encouraging MORR activists to contact NIOSH we need to promote links with the World Bank who have a major programme on road safety. We need to share experiences on issues such as ‘grey fleet’ where the UK government has done work (www.ogc.gov.uk/documents/Environment_Agency_Case_Study.pdf) and we need to direct people towards the Global Road Safety Forum (www.globalroadsafety.org/epidemic/partners.shtml) which brings together a whole range of international organisations working to make roads safer around the globe.

All in all it was a truly excellent conference. NIOSH laid on a fascinating coach tour of Washington by night which took us to the Jefferson and Lincoln Memorials (and I stood on the place where M Luther King made his ‘I have a dream’ speech.) I did a lot of networking and realised that we who helped to originate this idea need to do a lot more work at an international level if we are to continue to lead the way.

Unlike the impression one can have after many events of this sort — much is said but little achieved — I left convinced that, on the contrary, this conference would surely help to save many lives and reduce countless injuries in the future.
Some employers are banning their employees from using motorcycles for work-related travel. RoSPA’s occupational safety adviser, Roger Bibbings, asks, why?

Outside vocational motorcycle riding (like police and emergency services and couriers etc), at-work motorcycle use is not a common job requirement. We are all familiar though with traffic-beating scooter commuters and dyed-in-the-wool motorcycle riders who use their machines to travel between work locations as well as to and from home. Sadly there have been some fatalities and serious injuries while employees have been riding motorcycles (powered two wheelers – PTWs) in working time. In response – and despite government strictures about avoiding excessive risk aversion – of their need to manage occupational road risk within the same framework which they should already have in place for managing other aspects of health and safety at work. In fact, every year, three to four times as many workers are killed in work-related road traffic accidents as in all other occupational accidents put together. HSE and the DTI advise [www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg382.pdf] that, besides their duty to ensure safety in fixed workplaces, employers also have a duty to assess risks and introduce safe systems of work when employees are at work on the road, going for lower risk options, if reasonably practicable (e.g. teleconferencing, email, using trains or planes etc), but ensuring ‘safe journey’, ‘safe vehicle’ and ‘safe driver/rider’ where road travel is unavoidable. This is the case whoever owns the vehicle. It does not extend to safety while commuting but can include ‘mission journeys’ which begin from the employee’s home.

The approach advocated, however, is one based on ‘goal setting’ not prescription and at present there is no heavy enforcement drive from HSE in this area. On the other hand, at the scene of serious road crashes investigating police officers are beginning to ask about journey purpose and, if the
journey was for work, whether there were any job factors such as fatigue, distractions, incentives to speed, poor vehicle condition etc which could indicate a significant lack of care by the employer.

To motorcyclists an outright ban on motorcycles (as opposed to other vulnerable modes like cycling, for example) is likely to seem fairly draconian and yet another example of the allegedly restrictive role played by HSE. Yet, in recent years, although much maligned in the press, HSE has in reality been loath to opt for banning things outright (except where there were very good reasons). Its focus has tended to be not on trying to eliminate all risks but on assessing them and requiring the introduction of sensible controls.

In its guidance, Safer motorcycling through work (www.rospa.com/roadssafety/info/motorcycling_through_work.pdf), RoSPA has suggested that where employers have staff who ride motorcycles in order to carry out their work duties, notwithstanding the case for reducing unnecessary road travel for environmental and not just safety reasons, they should conduct suitable risk assessments and ensure that work-related journeys by motorcycle are safe, riders are fit and competent to ride safely, and that the machines used are fit-for-purpose and in a safe condition.

As with work-related car driving, RoSPA recommends journey planning so safest routes are chosen. We stress the need to avoid rider fatigue, ensure that machines are properly maintained – even if the rider owns the machine and not the employer. We also point out that employers need to ensure appropriate personal protective equipment is used and, if the riding is part of the job role, is provided without charge.

While RoSPA acknowledges that the consequences of crashes on PTWs are likely to be more severe than for car drivers, we argue that accident risk varies, depending on factors such as: the amount and type of work-related riding, features of the motorcycle, and the rider’s skills and attitudes, age, experience and personal characteristics.

We suggest that rider assessment should be used to review competence and to help identify those who are at the highest risk and in need of additional training and support.

We point to the need for employers to have good arrangements for ensuring rider fitness and to avoid impairment due to an ill health condition or alcohol and substance abuse. And we highlight the need to monitor and review performance, record incidents and violations and encourage staff feedback to determine whether safety management arrangements are working well and to identify what further action may be necessary.

Tolerable risk
All that said, even though employers may not need to go for an outright ban on PTW use, they will probably still need to consider some ‘safety lines in the sand’ which should not be crossed, for example, not just indicative limits to prevent riding in adverse weather conditions (ice, snow, very high winds etc) but experience and competence limits, for example, to prevent entry level riders from taking to the road in inappropriately powerful machinery.

The question still remains, however, at what point does high mileage motorcycling mean that the employee is reaching the limits of tolerable risk? RoSPA suggests that for company car and van drivers who cover 25,000 mpg, the annual average risk of fatal injury is about 1 in 8,000 a year (close to HSE’s limits of tolerable risk for workers). It is often quoted that the average risk of serious injury on PTWs is about twenty times that of car driving but there is a wide variation and much of the PTW casualty toll is of course associated with gross violating behaviour by riders. Thus the trained and cautious motorcyclist may indeed be at no higher risk than the average car driver, although an everyday perception of the risk level will always be affected by the fact that consequences of crashing on a PTW are likely to be more severe.

Thus, in theory, even for the highly competent rider, a work-related mileage of say, 10,000 mpg begins to put them in the intolerable zone. On the other hand, in practice, many professional riders (including not only police motorcycle patrol riders – who have a very good record – but motorcycle couriers as well) cover much higher annual mileages and manage to do so without incident (although cynics might say they are by definition a ‘survivor population’).

Clearly use of a PTW for work-related travel needs to be justified. For the non-vocational motorcycling employee who has simply to get around between locations it can offer certain advantages, coping with congestion, ease of parking, ease of travelling between locations, particularly if the same vehicle is used for commuting, for example. And the same advantages can often suggest to managers that a PTW might be a better option than say a van or a small car for some jobs and that it can be used safely provided riders are properly trained and supervised.

Taking all these points into account, is banning all non-vocational employee use of PTWs at work an example of sensible safety management or is it an example of ‘elf and safety’ going too far?
RoSPA’s occupational safety adviser Roger Bibbings argues that more priority needs to be given to vulnerable road users when addressing occupational road risk.

For the last fifteen years RoSPA has campaigned to ensure that employers address the management of occupational road risk (MORR) within the same framework that they should already have in place to manage other aspects of health and safety at work. The risk of serious injury when using the road network in the course of work is the biggest risk faced by most organisations in an increasingly mobile economy.

Although the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has not been able to take a major lead on this issue due to resource and other constraints, MORR has been embraced by many other authorities including the Department for Transport (who see it as a major strand in overall road casualty reduction), police forces and also many local authority road safety organisations. In addition, most major businesses now have MORR policies in place.

Predictably the main focus of such policies has been on reducing the risk of injury to employees as drivers or as passengers in vehicles being used for work purposes. The average risk of death or serious injury to high mileage company car and van drivers is still high compared with injury risks within the workplace.) But, of course, an equally important objective of a MORR policy is the protection of other road users who may be affected by the organisation’s activities on the road. In reality, however, too many companies are still focusing on protecting their employees in the vehicle, for example, thinking about spending even more to get cars with the highest NCAP (crash) rating and not thinking what they can do to reduce risks to other road users. Never forget, it’s not what you drive, but how you drive which should be the primary consideration in assessing road risk.

This point has struck me quite forcefully in looking at steps being taken to reduce the risks of serious injury to cyclists, particularly in London. Overall, serious cyclist casualties in the capital have come down in recent years but in 2011 16 cyclists were killed in London, an increase from 10 in 2010. A high proportion of these deaths involved cyclists being struck by LGVs and similar vehicles turning left. Any contact between large vehicles and vulnerable road users such as cyclists is likely to result in serious – and very often – fatal consequences.

A great deal of very good work has been going on for some time to try and reduce cycling casualties in the capital, driven mainly by Transport for London (TfL) and the London mayor, and backed by the efforts of key trade associations (such as the Freight Transport Association, the Mineral Products Association and the Road Haulage Association); major projects and companies, (particularly Crossrail, Cemex, Hanson) and other higher performers in the London Fleet (previously Freight) Operators Recognition Scheme (FORS).

Indeed prevention of LGV/cyclist collisions was the key theme at the annual FORS safety conference in London held in February. Some of the main interventions outlined at the conference include:

- Special LGV driver CPC training coupled with additional information and (multilingual) briefing and the fitting of safety technology in line with TfL guidance. This approach is being driven vigorously by Crossrail, for example, right down its supply chains, with non-compliant vehicles actually being turned away from the company’s sites if drivers cannot prove competence and if their vehicles are not fitted with specified safety equipment such as additional mirrors, side guards, audible warnings, proximity sensing systems and signage.
- Junction modifications at critical points and the fitting of ‘Trixi’ mirrors to aid drivers’ vision.
- Separation of cyclists from other traffic by more cycle lanes (cycle superhighways) and advanced stop lines etc.
- More events and publicity such as ‘Changing Places’ events in which cyclists and drivers are encouraged to interact to see things from each other’s point of view.

The whole issue of cyclist safety has become high profile in the current London
mayoral election, since both candidates are committed to promoting cycling to secure the transport, environment and health benefits it can deliver. However, they recognise that many people’s fear of being involved in an accident is one of the major barriers to encouraging more cycling in the city.

The Times newspaper has joined road safety campaigners, such as Cynthia Barlow (whose daughter was tragically killed in an accident with a lorry), with several special features (see ‘City Fit for Cycling’ at www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/public/cyclesafety), to highlight the need to make London a safe cycling city. Some of the campaigners’ proposed measures, such as a blanket 20mph speed limit in London, are controversial. Ideally the solution would be to separate all cyclists from other traffic but for the foreseeable future the accent will have to remain on safer driving and safer riding too. This is why awareness of cycling safety should be such an important part of MORR. There is much to learn and responsible companies can play a big role by spreading London good practices nationwide. (See also RoSPA’s factsheet on cycle safety – www.rospa.com/roadsafety/advice/cycling/info/cycling_accidents_fact_sheet.pdf). And it is critically important that interventions are properly evaluated to determine what works (see www.roadsafetyevaluation.com/introduction/purpose-of-evaluit.html).

Pedestrians
Another critical area within the overall MORR agenda is the safety of ‘at-work’ pedestrians, again a vulnerable group whose safety needs require closer re-examination. Annually about 380 adult pedestrians are killed and 35,000 are seriously injured on Britain’s highways in collisions that are reported to the police (many more suffer injuries serious enough to require hospital treatment but which are not reported to the police). A certain fraction of these will be people who were at-work at the time but how many of these fatalities and serious injuries are captured by RIDDOR reporting or indeed come within the scope of RIDDOR is not clear. These regulations limit reporting of injuries in work-related road incidents to quite specific circumstances such as work at roadworks or during deliveries and so on.

In recent years steps have been taken to tighten standards of protection for people working in the highway environment. These include most obviously people working at roadworks but also those engaged in vehicle recovery on high speed roads, those involved in refuse collection, postal and other deliveries and so on. But other areas which might merit review include dotcom delivery drivers (at risk in vehicle and on foot), those undertaking survey work or minor inspections of street furniture and so on.

Within fixed workplaces, where health and safety law is enforced by HSE and local authorities, much attention is paid to ensuring the safety of pedestrians in such settings, be they employees or visitors. Guidance such as HSE’s HSG136 lays stress on the need to control vehicle speeds on sites, to segregate pedestrians from traffic, to ensure adequate lighting and conspicuity etc. Vehicle control and use of one-way systems etc to eliminate reversing all form part of a set of goal-setting standards designed to keep pedestrians safe in a fixed workplace context. But, in most cases, achievement of safety for those working next to moving vehicles on the highway cannot be achieved by segregation and/or control of vehicle speeds etc. Arguably other methods used (training, supervision, warnings etc) need to be good enough to guarantee the same level of risk control. In sectors such as railways, for example, there are long-standing requirements to assess risks to trackside workers from moving trains and to adopt appropriate precautions, varying from taking possession of the line through to correct use of lookout or of permissioning based on risk assessment to enable lone patrolling where it is possible to do this safely. There are also rules relating to pedestrian safety that apply in airports and docks. Even in motor sports there is guidance backed by voluntary rules about the protection of trackside officials within refuges etc.

My point in making these comparisons is not to argue for blanket standards and approaches that should be used in every situation involving exposure of at-work pedestrians to traffic but simply to draw attention to the wide variety of circumstances in which workers are exposed to the risk of being struck by moving vehicles and to see if solutions in one area are transferable to others.

What it is reasonable and practicable to do to ensure safety is highly context specific but equally it seems that the level of residual risk that has to be tolerated by workers on the public highway, especially those carrying out short duration – and possibly quite distracting – work close to high speed traffic is very much higher than that that would be considered tolerable in other circumstances.

Review
On the face of it there is a good case for reviewing the true extent of work-related injury on the roads affecting employee pedestrians, especially the extent of such injury affecting employees in road mobile service-based roles (for example, those visiting roadside sites, providing services, or visiting or delivering to people in their own homes). Is this a bigger issue than we realise? Have existing solutions for ensuring the safety of at-work pedestrians on the highway been informed by a comparison with best practices in other sectors? This would seem to be a legitimate area for further study. Modern vehicles, cars especially, are becoming ever more comfortable and arguably safer. MORR for those outside the vehicle needs to be given higher priority.

Readers’ comments are welcome.
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Deeply rooted social attitudes to – and assumptions about – speed can make selling the safer speeds message very difficult, says RoSPA occupational safety adviser Roger Bibbings.

When driving for work, slow down and take it easy. Certainly never travel so fast that you cannot stop safely on your side of the road in the distance you can see to be clear.

If you manage people who drive for work, make it clear to them that your organisation does not tolerate speeding. And at appraisal, if your staff member has clocked up speeding points, discuss with them what can be done to help them avoid getting more. You might even consider fitting black box speed monitoring technology in their vehicle.

Whenever I make these points to audiences during my talks around the country on managing occupational road risk (MORR) I often get quite sharp reactions. It’s not speed that kills objectors say but other drivers. Small infractions of the speed limit, especially when roads are clear, are not that significant and so on. Responding I point out that because momentum increases as the square of the velocity, the energy to be dissipated in a crash rises much faster than the increase in speed, making crashes at even moderate speeds very much worse than at slower ones. Inappropriate speed also reduces the time and space margins available to cope with your own and other people’s errors, and it makes safe manoeuvring like steering and braking safely much more challenging.

But these arguments do not always convince those in the audience who prefer to see their ability to travel fast not just as personally advantageous but as positively progressive. The truth though is that underlying the counterarguments of these doubting Thomases is a whole set of deeply rooted social attitudes to – and assumptions about – speed which make selling the safer speeds message very difficult.

For example, at the moment there are many arguments still flowing backwards and forwards about whether the new HS2 is the right choice for our future investment in Britain’s railways. Personally I’m still not entirely convinced – particularly given the staggering costs – that shaving 52 minutes off the journey time between London and Leeds of itself will lead to a major increase in investment and economic prosperity. It assumes that for busy London-based business people, personal time management is so hyper-critical that this modest reduction in journey time will bring within their reach cities which otherwise they would not have visited. The underlying assumption here is the sacrifice of an extra hour demanded by the existing timetable makes a working day in the North unviable.

I very much suspect that the marginal utility of speed to save time, especially to people in positions of relative power in our society, is actually much less important than what speed per se symbolises. One of the things I have always marvelled at is the fact that, even in the so called Dark Ages, kings and princes especially, not to mention merchants and scholars, travelled both within Britain and across Europe (especially to Rome), venturing back and forth, travers-
ing vast distances in much the same way as their counterparts do today. They just took longer about it. They had no option but to walk, ride or grind their way in crude carriages over muddy roads. Their acceptance of the need to travel – mainly to broker and cement power relationships – was just as it is today but their perspective had to adjust to the practical limitations of means of travel at that time. On the plus side, their experience of such slow journeys was probably far more personally transformative than much faster travel for today’s businessman or woman could ever be.

But travel ate up time and thus it was that the invention of railways, the motor car and especially the aeroplane, not only transformed the pace and scale of communication but in a sense became an enduring symbol of our triumph as a species over the space/time limitations of the human condition.

Whereas in reality it was the harnessing of combustive chemistry to transform agriculture and the production of building materials, cloth and household goods and so on which lay at the heart of the industrial revolution.

**Go with the flow**

On the wall of a delightful motor museum in Somerset (which has a marvellous collection of red cars) I recently saw a sign from the 1930s proclaiming that, after speech itself the motor car was the greatest invention which had facilitated communication between peoples. Printing presses and telegraphy, not to mention the wireless might well have been selected as candidates for pole position, but no, our trusty friend the automobile had been selected as way out in front.

There is no doubt that locomotion not just transformed, but helped bring into being the modern world, especially by facilitating the flow of raw materials and goods from place to place. Flow here is indeed the critical issue. Remember, for a very short time canals could still compete with railways by transporting large quantities of material, until that is, railways could manage to transport the same quantities much faster.

Interestingly the mathematics of flow seem to have eluded our politicians even today. Witness the present Government’s proposal, now withdrawn, to raise the motorway speed limit from 70 to 80 miles an hour, apparently to help our hard-pressed, super-busy business people to compete and deliver. Apart from the absurdity of travelling faster for a short time just to arrive a bit earlier at the next jam, from a purely mathematical standpoint, the proposition has very little merit. This is because in a continuous flow of vehicles, although the proposed increase in speed of each one would have been about 14%, if the necessary safety separation between them all (remember the two second rule?) was maintained, the actual increase in flow rate would only have been about 1% (and largely because the increase in air resistance is non-linear, fuel consumption would have gone up by over 30%).

If civil servants dig around in the archives at the DfT they will discover that 70mph was originally selected as a speed limit on motorways (to conserve fuel – not lives) precisely because it is about the point where vehicle speed and flow are optimised.

There is no doubt that being able to travel faster than not just Shanks’s pony but the Pony Express has real advantages for humanity. Yet even when it is clear that the search for ever greater speed is becoming systematically dysfunctional, the mistaken belief persists that ever greater speed automatically means progress. It is as if we believe that our ability to shrink distance can in some sense extend our lifespan and our use of this wondrous but finite gift. So even in an age when things like supersonic civil air transport have been abandoned in favour of even bigger and much more luxurious airliners (the economics of flow again), high speed – and even higher speed – are still seen as the harbingers, nay the mid-wife of ever greater growth in goods, services and human happiness. Deep in our social psyche we still feel that faster is obviously better and better cannot be so unless it is faster.

This is very much at the heart of the HS2 debate with its protagonists arguing that because all other advanced nations have invested in high speed rail, it is the sine qua non of competitiveness and we just cannot afford to be left behind. But others argue that there is a real danger that by the time our own high speed railway is complete, social attitudes – even among business people – towards the Gadarene rush to arrive just minutes earlier than their competitors – will have changed. As with the canals, new communications innovations will have taken its place.

For example, post 9/11 many multinational businesses invested heavily in teleconferencing to avoid the need to travel by air. In many cases it is still clunky and unsatisfactory and it will never replace the intimacy of a face-to-face meeting where you can see, even smell, fear in your political or business opponent, but even smaller firms are now using this technology extensively to avoid having to travel.

During my MORR talks I often ask my audience to raise their hands if they drive for work and to only put them down when I have passed their annual mileage figure. In a room of 50-60 people there are usually a couple of hands still up at 30,000 miles. I get little thanks from them when I point out that, given that we average in a year no more than 30mph, this distance actually represents a thousand hours of their working time spent at the wheel – time in which they also have to resist the temptation to communicate with customers and colleagues in other ways such as by using a mobile phone or worse still, while stuck in jams, trying to Skype their next business appointee on a mobile computer perched on the front passenger seat.

**Gridlock panic**

I suspect that in their hearts everyone knows that expanding access to more rapid locomotion will ultimately mean only more gridlock. But perhaps it is that gridlock panic in the heart of every trapped motor-way traveller that produces the great wish to be able to break free and fly like a bird, following in the path of multi-millionaires and mafia grandees buzzing along high above them in their helicopters. And speed fantasy it certainly is which fuels the interest in the endless Top Gear parade of absurdly overpowered luxury sports cars which no ordinary person can buy and – speed limits or not, no one can ever use safely – and certainly not to their full potential – on crowded public roads.

We are no doubt a shrinking global society. But our relationship with speed, like our relationship with power and industry (which, due largely to environmentalism, is now seen as more Faustian bargain than outright triumph over nature), is changing, albeit slowly and subtly.

I will be 65 in February next year and have been an everyday motorcyclist since I was 16, having travelled nearly a million miles on over 50 machines. In May I rediscovered the joys of slow, two-wheel travel when to raise money for charity I rode over three days from Land’s End to John O’ Groats, together with five others, using little 30-year-old machines. Along the way I was reminded of my father, also a lifetime motorcyclist. On my 16th birthday – and presumably to remind me to take it slowly – he wrote the words ‘*Festina Lente*’ (make haste slowly) on the flyleaf of a book, *Motorcycle engineering* by P. E. Irving, which I still have. It’s a good philosophy.