



accidents don't have to happen

Driving for Work Drink and Drugs



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Introduction

Driving is the most dangerous work activity that most people do, and it contributes to far more work-related accidental deaths and serious injuries than all other work activities.

Very few organisations can operate without using the road. Millions of vehicles - lorries, vans, taxis, buses, emergency service vehicles, company cars, motorcycles, bicycles - are used for work purposes, and many people work on foot on the road (maintenance workers, refuse collectors, postal workers, vehicle breakdown employees, the police and so on).

Unfortunately, all these workers face risks on the road because they are doing their jobs. They can also create risks for everyone else on the road.

The HSE estimate that "more than a quarter of all road traffic incidents may involve somebody who is driving as part of their work at the time."

Police road accident data shows that every year over 500 people are killed (almost one third of all road deaths), 5,000 seriously injured and almost 40,000 slightly injured in collisions involving drivers or riders who are driving for work. This includes other road users, as well as at-work drivers and riders themselves. In fact, most of those killed on work-related journeys are passengers, pedestrians and riders rather than the at-work drivers and riders.



HSE'S [Driving at Work](#) Guidelines state that

"health and safety law applies to on-the-road work activities and the risks should be effectively managed within a health and safety system."

This means that you need to put in place policies, people and procedures to enable you to understand:

- How your organisation uses the road (the staff who do so, the vehicles they use and the journeys they make)
- The risks this creates to your staff and other people
- The potential consequences of those risks, and
- The measures needed to manage and reduce these risks and consequences.

This will make your organisation more efficient and successful by helping you to:

- Keep your employees and volunteers safe while at work
- Protect other road users
- Save money by reducing crashes and incidents
- Reduce business interruptions
- Avoid adverse publicity associated with crashes
- Promote smoother driving which improves fuel efficiency and reduces environmental impact.



Drinking and Driving

Over 200 people are killed and more than 1,100 seriously injured in drink drive crashes each year. Often it is an innocent person who suffers, not the driver who is over the drink drive limit. Pedestrians, motorcyclists, pedal cyclists and vehicle passengers are killed or seriously injured by drink drivers each year, as are around 40 children.



The legal drink drive limit is 80mg of alcohol per 100ml of blood, but in Scotland it is lower – 50mg of alcohol per 100ml of blood. In Northern Ireland, the limit is the same as in England and Wales, but there are plans to lower it.

Every year the police breath test over half a million drivers or riders, and over 60,000 (c12% of those tested) fail or refuse to take the test. They then face a driving ban of at least 12 months, a large fine and possible imprisonment.

However, the risk of crashing increases well below the legal limit. Drivers with a blood alcohol level between 20 mg/100 ml and 50 mg/100 ml are three times more likely to be killed in a crash than those who have no alcohol in their blood. The risk for drivers with a blood alcohol level between 50 mg/100 ml and 80 mg/100 ml (still below the legal limit) is at least six times greater, and it rises to 11 times with an alcohol level between 80 mg/100 ml and 100 mg/100 ml.

Alcohol impairs judgement, making drivers over-confident and more likely to take risks. It slows their reactions, increases stopping distances, affects judgement of speed and distance and reduces the field of vision. Even a small amount, well below the legal limit, seriously affects the ability to drive safely.

Alcohol is absorbed into the bloodstream very quickly, but it takes about an hour for 1 unit to be removed by a healthy liver. The exact number of units of alcohol in a drink depends on its size and alcoholic strength by volume (abv). For example, a 175ml glass of wine of 12%abv would be 2.1 units, and a 250ml glass of the same wine would be 3 units.

Drinkers cannot be sure how much alcohol they are consuming because the alcoholic strength of drinks varies enormously, as does the size of measures. In pubs, bars and restaurants a glass of wine could be 175ml or 250ml, bottles and cans are different sizes and spirits could be 25ml or 35ml measures. Drinks poured at home are usually larger than ones bought in a pub or restaurant, and it is difficult to know the alcoholic strength of a drink without seeing the bottle.



The speed with which alcohol is absorbed into the bloodstream varies depending on a person's size, age, weight and gender and whether they have eaten. The same amount of alcohol creates different blood alcohol levels in different people.

Never rely on trying to calculate accurately how much alcohol is in your body, and whether you are above or below the drink drive limit.

This guide gives simple advice on how employers and line managers can help to ensure that their staff are not tempted or pressurised into driving at inappropriate speed.



Drugs and Driving

Almost 100 people are killed each year in accidents involving drivers who were impaired by illegal drugs or medicines), over 400 are seriously injured and around 1,100 slightly injured.

A new drug drive law came into force in England and Wales in March 2015 and made it an offence to drive, attempt to drive, or be in charge of a motor vehicle with certain drugs in the body above a specified limit. This applies to illegal drugs, prescribed medicines and over-the-counter medicines.

The law sets very low limits for eight illegal drugs, such as cannabis, cocaine, ecstasy and ketamine, so taking even a very small amount could put a person over the limit. The limits for eight prescription drugs (cloanzepam, diazepam, flunitrazepam, lorazepam, oxazepam, temazepam, methadone and morphine) are higher than normal prescribed doses. So someone taking a medicine under the advice of a healthcare professional and/or as printed in the Patient Information Leaflet, should not exceed the limit. However, they must still be fit to drive, so anyone taking medicines should talk to their doctor, pharmacist or healthcare professional before driving.

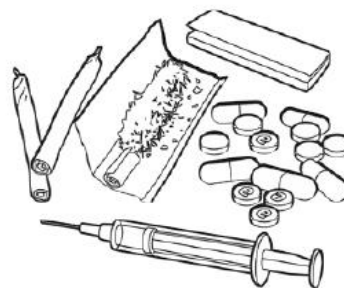
Although this new offence only applies to specific drugs, anyone driving while unfit through drugs, whether illegal or prescribed or over-the-counter medicines, can still be prosecuted under the previous law, which remains in place.

The Police can, and do, conduct roadside tests to help them assess whether a driver may be impaired. The penalties for drug driving are the same as for drink driving

Illegal Drugs

Drugs can affect a driver's behaviour and body in a variety of ways (depending on the drug). These can include:

- slower reactions
- poor concentration and confused thinking
- distorted perception
- over confidence, resulting in taking unnecessary risks
- poor co-ordination
- erratic behaviour
- aggression, panic attacks or paranoia
- blurred vision
- tremors, dizziness, cramps
- severe fatigue the following day



The effects can last for hours or even days, and vary from person to person. They can be difficult for an individual to detect.

Morning After

Many drink drivers are caught the morning after they have been drinking. As it takes several hours for alcohol to disappear from the body, someone who was drinking late the previous evening, could easily still be over the limit on their way to work the next morning. Even if under the limit, they may still be affected by the alcohol in their body.



Medicines

For many medications it is difficult to predict whether, how, when and for how long they will affect a person's ability to drive safely. A driver may not even notice that they have been impaired until it is too late. The effects depend on how much, how often and how a medicine is used, plus the psychological and physical attributes of the person taking it.

Some medicines may cause:

- drowsiness
- dizziness or feeling light-headed
- difficulty concentrating
- feeling edgy, angry or aggressive
- feeling nauseous or otherwise unwell
- reduced coordination, including shaking
- feeling unstable



A person's driving ability can also be affected by the medical condition for which they are taking the medicine.

Many over-the-counter medicines, including remedies for coughs, colds, flu and hay fever, cause unwanted drowsiness which might impair driving. Warnings about drowsiness are not always clear so, for example, if the label says "may cause drowsiness", assume that it will do so.

Alcohol and Drugs

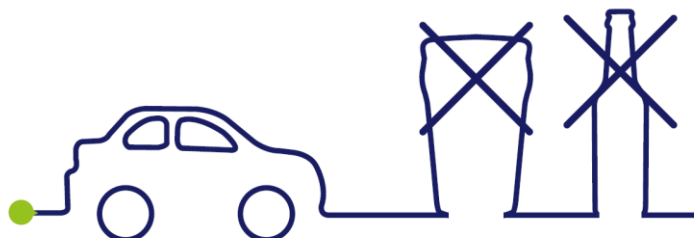
Taking alcohol and drugs together is even worse as their effects combine and impairment can be multiplied. Even low levels of alcohol mixed with low levels of drugs can cause significant impairment.

The Legal Penalties

The penalties for drink driving, drug driving and driving while unfit through drugs are:

- A minimum 12-month driving ban
- A criminal record
- A substantial fine or up to 6 months in prison or both

Other consequences can include losing your job, losing independence, higher car insurance when you get your licence back and trouble getting into countries like the USA. Of course, the ultimate penalty could be having to live with injuring or even killing another person.



What employers can do

Expect Safe Driving

Make sure that all your staff, including directors, senior managers and line managers, understand that they are expected to drive safely, responsibly and legally. If they have concerns about the organisation's driving policy or procedures, they should raise them with their line manager or staff representative.

Consult Staff

Consult staff and/or their safety representatives about the organisation's policies on alcohol, drugs, and safe driving and that this is reviewed periodically in joint health and safety committee meetings.

Raise Awareness

As part of recruitment, training and staff appraisal, remind drivers and line managers about the:

- law about drinking and driving and drugs/medicines and driving
- effects of alcohol, including the morning after, and drugs and medicines on driving
- organisation's policy on these issues
- importance of planning ahead and arranging for a designated driver, public transport or an overnight stay overnight, if they are intending to drink
- importance of not driving if they are drinking alcohol.
- the importance of asking their doctor or pharmacist might affect their driving, and if so, whether there is a safer alternative (but do not rely just on this)
- action to take if they feel their driving may be affected by alcohol or drugs
- help that is available for staff with drink or drugs problems.



Review your workplace drug and alcohol policy

Review your existing workplace drug and alcohol policy to see how it can encompass driving. Free guides are available from the HSE: '[Drug Misuse at Work](http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg91.pdf)' (www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg91.pdf) and '[Don't Mix It: A Guide for Employers on Alcohol at Work](http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg240.htm)' (<http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg240.htm>).

Set Clear Rules

In particular, ensure that all staff, including senior managers and line managers, understand that they must not drive for work if their ability to do so safely is affected by alcohol, drugs or medicines. Doing so should be a serious disciplinary matter.

Do not allow alcohol (or drugs) to be consumed by staff on duty, even, for example, if they are entertaining clients. Advise staff not to drink at lunchtime, especially if they are driving later. Remind them that it takes hours for the body to get rid of alcohol – they can still be impaired on their journey home or the following morning.

Lead by Example

Senior Managers, from the head of the organisation down, should lead by personal example and follow the guidance in this leaflet, both in the way they drive themselves and in encouraging colleagues to drive safely.





Assess Your Drivers

Assess drivers' attitudes and their driving competence on recruitment, during induction and regularly afterwards, including the issue of drink, drugs and medicines, with their drivers during periodic staff appraisals and team meetings.

Assess all drivers regularly, but prioritise those with the greatest mileages, young drivers, drivers using a new type of vehicle, such as a van, and drivers with a crash history or history of motoring offences. Use the results to identify training needs and other risk management measures, and discuss driving during individual staff appraisals, and in group meetings.

Train Your Drivers

Organise 'Drink and Drugs Awareness' seminars for staff. These should cover all of the issues above and there are many training organisations that can provide this service.

Train managers to recognise signs of possible alcohol or substance abuse. These include sudden mood or behaviour changes, unusual irritability or aggression, worsening relationships with colleagues and others, impaired job performance or an increase in poor timekeeping and short-term sickness absence. These signs do not necessarily mean a drink or drugs problem, but may be an indication that help is needed.

Provide driver education and practical training for your drivers, based on the needs identified through driver assessment and targeting those at greatest risk first. See "[Driving for Work: Driver Assessment and Training](https://www.rosipa.com/road-safety/resources/free/employers/)", available free at <https://www.rosipa.com/road-safety/resources/free/employers/>.

Be Constructive

Treat staff with alcohol or drug problems sympathetically and in confidence, no differently from staff with other medical problems. Offer access to medical or therapeutic help for staff who come forward with problems. Staff who feel that they are unfit to drive because they are affected by drugs or by alcohol consumed the previous night, should be able to declare this without being punished. However, persistent instances should trigger disciplinary action.

Give staff who report that they are unfit to drive because they are affected by medicines other duties and ask them to consult their doctor or pharmacist for alternatives. If necessary, they should be signed off sick and the organisation's sickness policy followed. Be alert to the risk of employees feeling under pressure not to take their medication (or the full dose) so they can continue to drive. The consequences could be just as serious.

Provide Alternatives

Do not provide alcohol at lunchtimes (during meetings, for example). At office events or parties make sure non-alcoholic drinks are available, and if possible, organise transport home or overnight stops for staff who want to drink. Remind staff who are driving not to drink alcohol and if they are staying overnight, they may still be impaired the following morning.

Check Driver Licences

Conduct regular driver licence checks, at least once a year, but more often for high mileage drivers or those with a poor driving record. An easy way of tracking endorsements is to check driving licences (at appointment and regularly afterwards); the most cost-effective way of doing this is usually via the DVLA's online checking facility (each driver must sign a mandate allowing you to do this).



Consider a Permit to Drive

Many organisations operate a 'permit to drive' system in which only staff who have been authorised to do so are allowed to drive on company business; sometimes it is a condition of the company's insurance.

Liaise with the Police

Make it clear that the organisation will co-operate with police enquiries or fixed penalty notices resulting from an incident or alleged speeding offence and will supply to the police the name and address of the employee to whom the vehicle was allocated at the time.

Liaise with Other Organisations

It is very useful to liaise with police forces, road safety bodies and other organisations such as trade associations to share knowledge and experience.

Monitor and Review

Managers should discuss at-work driving with their drivers during periodic staff appraisals and team meetings. The circumstances of any speeding offences should form part of an individual employee's performance appraisal, leading, where appropriate, to new personal performance targets.

Be aware that some staff, especially younger employees or those new to the company, may not feel able to raise concerns for fear of jeopardising their relationship with the company or their manager. For more advice about "[Young Drivers at Work](http://www.rospa.com/roadsafety/youngdriversatwork/default.aspx)", see www.rospa.com/roadsafety/youngdriversatwork/default.aspx.

Require Reporting

Require all staff and managers who drive for work to report collisions (including damage-only ones), significant near misses and motoring offences. Also encourage them to pro-actively raise any concerns they have.

Require Drivers to Report Drink and Drug Related Offences

Require drivers who have been cautioned, summoned or convicted in relation to drug or alcohol offences to inform their line manager so that a discussion can take place about whether they need help to ensure that they do not drive while impaired. This enables, where practicable, an investigation to be conducted to determine whether the driver's fitness was a contributory factor, and what (if any) action is necessary to prevent repeat occurrences. Keep the organisation's insurers informed.

Conduct Screening Tests

Some organisations conduct screening tests for alcohol or drug misuse, either on a random basis for all staff, as part of recruitment or if there is a reason to suspect a particular individual may have a problem.

Screening raises civil liberties issues and is only likely to be effective if developed in careful consultation with staff and their representatives and makes a demonstrable contribution to reducing risks. It should lead to help being provided for anyone with a problem, and be seen as a deterrent rather than a method of 'catching employees'.

It is important that staff are aware that screening may take place and consent to it; therefore, it should be written into employment contracts (in consultation with staff and their representatives).



Record and Investigate Crashes and Incidents

Require staff who are involved in a work related crash or damage-only incident to report this to their line manager so that it can be investigated to determine whether inappropriate speed was a contributory factor, and what (if any) action is necessary to prevent repeat occurrences. It is essential to ensure that the organisation's insurers are kept informed as failure to do so may invalidate the insurance policy. If possible, also record and analyse near misses, as they can provide valuable information.

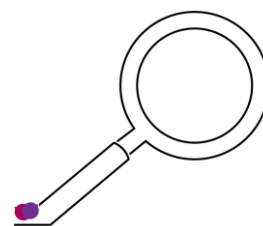
Encourage staff to report all work-related road incidents, near misses and road traffic offences (whether at work or not). Line managers should understand their responsibilities to ensure that reporting procedures are followed and encourage a 'just culture' so staff are reassured that reporting will not lead to unfair action.

Investigate Incidents

Investigate crashes (including damage only ones), offences and near misses to establish both the immediate and root causes of what happened, and to identify the measures that will reduce the risk of repeat occurrences. Share the lessons learned throughout the organisation.

The managers responsible for investigations should be properly trained to conduct investigations, and analyse and interpret the findings. Telematics are a useful way of providing objective and accurate data about what a vehicle was doing immediately before and during a crash or incident.

It is crucial that lessons are learned from the results of monitoring and investigations, and fed back into the organisation's MORR policy and procedures. Key points should also be communicated to managers and staff. Review claims data with the organisation's insurers and vehicle providers.



Further Information and Support

[Driving at Work: A Guide for Employers](#)

[RoSPA Driving for Work Resources](#)

[RoSPA Fleet Safety](#)

[RoSPA Advanced Drivers and Riders](#)

[Occupational Road Safety Alliance \(ORSA\)](#)

[Scottish Occupational Road Safety Alliance \(ScORSA\)](#)

[Driving for Better Business \(DfBB\)](#)

[Fleet Safety Benchmarking](#)

[Think Road Safety](#)

[The Highway Code](#)

[Department for Transport](#)

[Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency \(DVLA\)](#)

[Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency](#)

[Health and Safety Executive](#)

[Road Safety GB](#)

[Road Safety Scotland](#)

[Road Safety Wales](#)

[Don't Mix It: A Guide for Employers on Alcohol at Work](#)

[Drug Misuse at Work: A Guide for Employers](#)

[Drink Aware](#)

[Faculty of Occupational Medicine](#)

[Think Road Safety Drink Driving](#)

[Think Road Safety Drug Driving](#)





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