

WHITEPAPER

COVID-19
2021

DRIVING FOR WORK - THE IMPORTANCE OF WELLBEING



iam
RoadSmart



Introduction

COVID-19 transformed the way of life of millions worldwide. But, in disrupting the fabric of industrial, political and social life it also shone a spotlight on an area that for years had been sidelined: employee wellbeing and its impact on workplace road safety.

As places of work, shops and even roads closed down, new ways of life emerged. 'Remote' meetings replaced face-to-face engagements, millions were furloughed, forcing others to shoulder the load, while the daily commute - not to mention shopping and eating out - were put on hold.

For many, pressures rapidly intensified including for those involved with driving for work. The rush towards online buying placed new strains on delivery drivers, especially with the growth of same-day deliveries.

The logistics industry came under mounting pressure as it fought to maintain critical supply lines, as did other distribution workers and, in turn, their managers and fleet managers. Taxi drivers, company car drivers and gig-economy drivers and riders all had to come to terms with a new, often more stressful way of life overnight.

Today, as the initial threat of COVID-19 begins to recede, many of the wellbeing problems it highlighted remain highly visible. Those furloughed - or forced to work from home - still report feelings of isolation and insecurity. Doubts over the future of the economy and job security continue to exacerbate psychological pressures.

"What Covid did was expose what in many cases was already there," says IAM RoadSmart's Chief Executive Officer, Tony Greenidge." Were delivery drivers rushed and under pressure before Covid? Yes. Post-Covid they probably will be more so, because there's more fear about job security and more pressure on employers to recover lost ground. But at least now we are discussing it."

Here we examine those pressures and how industry and society have responded. We investigate the close relationship between employee wellbeing and workplace road safety. We also consider health problems that can be triggered or worsened by driving for work.

We question what we have learned from this global crisis and how this can help us drive into a brighter, safer, more efficient - more caring - future.



“PEOPLE LONG FOR EVERYTHING TO GO BACK TO NORMAL. THE PROBLEM IS, FOR MANY DRIVERS NORMAL WASN'T SUCH A GOOD PLACE ANYWAY.”

**TONY GREENIDGE, CEO,
IAM ROADSMART**



QUANTIFYING THE WELLBEING PROBLEM

Long before COVID-19, it was already known that a high proportion of road collisions involved someone driving for work. Now, a timely new study by University College London (UCL) and Agilysis has pulled the issue into focus. It found that about one in three road deaths and one in five seriously injured casualties are sustained when someone is driving for work. At a time of intense new pressures, the study called the wellbeing of business drivers starkly into question.

'Driving For Work - A Strategic Review Of Risks Associated With Cars And Light Vans, Implications For Policy and Practice' said that the economy was changing fast, with a rapid increase in vans and a boom in people working in the gig economy. It noted that vans and their drivers were not subject to the same strict regulations and safeguards as HGV, bus and coach drivers.

Another symptom of the changing economy, driven partly by COVID-19, is that growing numbers of workers are turning to insecure, often poorly paid gig-economy work such as food delivery, as reported by the 2019 report by the University of Hertfordshire and the TUC, 'Platform Work in the UK 2016-2019'.

It said that nearly one worker in ten was now undertaking 'platform work' at least once a week, often to supplement income; double the number recorded three years earlier. A RoSPA study on the gig economy said that pressures could include 'unsafe schedules causing fatigue and time pressures or having to respond to work messages while driving or riding'.

Venson fleet management solutions, in its report 'It's Good to Talk - Caring About Mental Health', says employees suffering from stress were 50% more likely to drive dangerously and be involved in crashes. The pressure of an increasingly demanding work culture in the UK was one of the 'biggest contributors to stress among the general population'.

"There's clearly a link between people's state of mind and concentration, attention and aggression on the road, says Tony Greenidge. "A new set of pressures - many not even related to the workplace - has suddenly hit us over the last 12 months. It's bound to have contributed to the strain."

Neil Greig, IAM RoadSmart's Director of Policy and Research, adds: "Historically many organisations never got the link between wellbeing and road safety. Only the better ones grasped it. Now, people are focusing more on this because the growth of the gig economy and COVID-19 forced us to sit up and take notice."



“ HISTORICALLY MANY ORGANISATIONS NEVER GOT THE LINK BETWEEN WELLBEING AND ROAD SAFETY... THE GROWTH OF THE GIG ECONOMY AND COVID-19 FORCED US TO SIT UP AND TAKE NOTICE. ”

NEIL GREIG, DIRECTOR OF POLICY AND RESEARCH, IAM ROADSMART

Rebecca Ashton, IAM RoadSmart’s Head of Policy and Research, believes that today, many workers are ‘extremely stressed’ because of worries about job security in the post-COVID-19 landscape. “It heaps pressure on them to do more and be seen as the ‘star employee’”, she says. “We know there’s a link between people’s wellbeing and road safety, even if research on this is only in the early stages, and even if some employers don’t fully recognise that.”

Workers’ job security and money fears may be well founded. A 2020 Driving for Better Business (DfBB) Resilience Survey found that COVID-19 left many UK businesses ‘worryingly’ exposed to heightened risk on the roads, and with reduced ability to cut operating costs as they fought their way back to recovery.

Despite being ‘bullish’ about the future and some firms having thrived, many were missing a golden opportunity to improve driving-for-work policies and procedures, the survey of business leaders found. The poll of 300 organisations ranging from SMEs to large companies found that, as organisations adapt to a new, post-lockdown landscape, they are missing important opportunities. Less than one in five (18%) of SMEs, and one in three (36%) large companies had driving-for-work policies in place following the pandemic.

Further reinforcing the link between wellbeing and road safety, DfBB previously probed leadership issues with its gap analysis tool, finding that only 57% of businesses could demonstrate a clear top-level commitment to work-related road safety.

Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle drivers have been among frontline workers exposed to the virus on a daily basis. “Fear of catching it while working has caused massive stress for thousands of drivers,” says Steve Wright MBE, Licensed Private Hire Car Association chairman. “They had to carry on with NHS, special needs, educational and government work. Additionally, emergency ‘Covid’ road closures have added massively to pressures, creating congestion, lengthening journeys and consuming more fuel.”

In 2017, Mercedes-Benz Vans UK research found that almost one in five van drivers described their current mental health as ‘poor’ or ‘very poor’, with three-quarters saying work was a contributory factor. One can only imagine how the situation must have worsened for drivers of all descriptions.



“ THE LACK OF DRIVE FOR WORK POLICIES AND GENERAL FAILURE TO RAISE ASSOCIATED ISSUES AND ADDRESS THEM AT BOARD LEVEL, INDICATES THERE IS A LONG WAY TO GO IN ENCOURAGING BUSINESS... TO IMPLEMENT BEST PRACTICE WHEN IT COMES TO RIDING OR DRIVING FOR WORK. ”

DRIVING FOR BETTER BUSINESS, 2020 BUSINESS RESILIENCE SURVEY



TACKLING THE KEY CHALLENGES

Fatigue, mental and physical health issues, weak employer strategies and a lack of prosecutions for health and safety lapses all contribute to poor wellbeing and workplace road safety, experts say.



Fatigue

A key threat that often goes unnoticed is fatigue. Causes include poor workforce management, poor sleep, stressful working environments and presenteeism (being at work for longer than is required, because of job insecurity).

Corporate sleep and fatigue experts, 'Third Pillar of Health', report that insufficient sleep - often through worry and stress or physical ailments - costs the UK economy £11.8 billion per annum in absence and lost productivity. That, estimates Third Pillar's 'Sleep and Fatigue in UK Working Populations' study, is equivalent to £36,011 per 100 workers. And that was before COVID-19.

'Short sleeping' costs transportation companies £50,263 per 100 workers each year. In fact, workers in transportation average just 6 hours and 17 minutes' sleep per night, while shift workers in transport get just 5 hours and 44 minutes on average - well below the recommended 7 - 9 hours per night.

For 57% of workers, says Third Pillar, sleepiness interferes with work activities at least a few times a month. The Office of Rail and Road (ORR) says that performance is likely to be impaired if workers have had less than six hours of sleep in the previous 24 hours, or less than 12 hours in the previous 48.

Why is this allowed to happen? According to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), 'managing the risks to employees who drive at work requires more than just compliance with road legislation'. The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 requires employers to take 'appropriate steps to ensure the health and safety of their employees and others who may be affected by their activities'. This includes when they are driving at work. Under the Act, an employer has a responsibility to take 'all reasonable steps to manage these risks and do everything reasonably practicable to protect people from harm in the same way as they would in the workplace'.

Unfortunately, as Tony Greenidge observes, "The two problem words there are 'reasonably' and 'practicable'. One person's interpretation might be totally different from another's. We want this turned into a minimum requirement less open to interpretation. The regulations need tightening up." Otherwise, he says, issues such as the amount of time drivers spend behind the wheel, driving at night or when tired will not be sufficiently addressed.

Third Pillar says that:

- Fatigue accounts for around 20% of accidents on UK roads and 30% of fatal accidents.
- Drivers awake for 24 hours are seven times more likely to have an accident, and fatigue-related accidents tend to be more serious due to lack of corrective action.
- 40% of car, van and lorry drivers said they have carried on driving when too tired.

A KING'S COLLEGE LONDON/IPSON MORI SURVEY IN 2020 FOUND THAT

63%

OF BRITONS SAY THEIR ABILITY TO GET TO SLEEP WORSENE SINCE LOCKDOWN BEGAN.



“ FATIGUE IS A MAJOR INFLUENCER OF DRIVER BEHAVIOUR. WE KNOW FROM SEVERAL STUDIES THAT OUR TOLERANCE TO RISK INCREASES WHEN WE ARE TIRED. ”

**MARCUS DE GUINGAND,
MANAGING DIRECTOR,
THIRD PILLAR OF
HEALTH**



IAM ROADSMART'S GUIDE,
'MANAGING DRIVER FATIGUE'
CARRIES INVALUABLE ADVICE
ON MANAGING DRIVERS' HOURS.

What employers can do

"I would like to see sleep disorder screening run in conjunction with Occupational Health," says Marcus. "Given up to 85% of sleep disorders are undiagnosed this could be revolutionary for the industry."

Neil Greig says that another way to tackle fatigue is for employers to fit vehicles with technology that detects drowsiness in drivers, and alerts them. "My concern is that drivers might think 'I've got the detection system, I'm OK to carry on driving,' so there's a vital need for education around this issue too."

IAM RoadSmart - which has its own strict policy on driving hours and distances - believes that organisations with telematics systems should be compelled to carry out effective analysis of the data created, and to show they have acted on it. "We also want more widespread use of telematics data in targeted driver training," says Neil. "You can easily tell if someone's been driving 12 hours a day or driving erratically."

It also wants companies to introduce driving-for-work policies that ban early morning meetings and prohibit employees from working over-long hours. Drivers should be encouraged to stop regularly on longer trips, while expenses policies should encourage the purchase of caffeinated drinks (within reason) and, where necessary, overnight hotels.

Third Pillar suggests that company policies could include providing taxis when workers are too tired to drive safely. Current Working Time Regulations and Hours of Service rules are not enough to protect staff says Marcus de Guingand, because they fail to take into account undiagnosed sleep disorders, poor sleep habits, the effects of rotating shift patterns, and parents with young children, who suffer sleep deprivation. They also fail to consider commuting times which don't allow for sufficient rest between shifts.

Neil Greig says: "When IAM RoadSmart trains drivers, it looks at organisations' policies and offers advice on things like their fatigue policy, while rewriting their Driving for Work policy. Their policy should state: 'We shall not send people to early morning meetings; we won't ask people to do more than a certain number of hours in a day.'"

What employees can do

“Employees are responsible for their wellbeing too and most recognise that,” says Rebecca Ashton, who urges workers to be aware of tell-tale signs that they could fall asleep.

Key signs, according to Third Pillar, include:

- Frequent yawning and eyelids drooping
- Straining your eyes to focus on the road
- Memory lapses or frequently hitting the rumble strips

Any of the above mean that a driver is at risk of a microsleep, lasting from fractions of a second up to two seconds, resulting in total loss of alertness.

“The good news is that tiredness does not suddenly come upon us,” says Marcus de Guingand, who says that common - but ineffective - countermeasures include:

- Winding down the window
- Turning up the music
- Stopping to take a quick walk
- Talking to a passenger
- Stopping to splash cold water on your face
- Adjusting the seat so it is uncomfortable
- Changing lanes more frequently.

In laboratory tests none of these reduced drowsiness or increased alertness.

Effective countermeasures include:

- Obtaining adequate sleep before a journey
- Taking a nap before a journey
- Avoiding driving in the early morning
- Pulling over to a roadside hotel to sleep
- Consuming a caffeinated drink and immediately taking a 15 - 20-minute nap
- Changing drivers (provided the new driver is alert).

How technology can help

Driver monitoring systems designed to detect fatigue and inattention by tracking drivers' behaviour and eye movements are a potential solution. From 2022, only vehicles with driver monitoring systems will be eligible for the top, five-star NCAP rating.

Expert analysis of data from telemetry systems - often fitted to fleet vehicles - can also indicate whether drivers are driving erratically, a potential indicator of fatigue.

IAM RoadSmart says such systems are only triggered once drivers are already showing signs of fatigue; they can't prevent drivers from starting a journey when already tired. Nor can they force drivers to take a break or address the root causes of fatigue, unless the data they generate is monitored and acted upon by employers, triggering training, or other interventions.

Dr Sam Chapman, Chief Innovation Officer at The Floow, a world leader in telematics data management, says that by 2022, 82.9 million driver-monitoring units are expected to have been installed on vehicles worldwide.

“We can determine aspects of fatigue from telematics; we can feed back that information to the insurer or the individual,” says Dr Chapman, who agrees that some driver monitoring systems can encourage drivers to carry on driving while fatigued. “You need ... multiple measures,” he says. “It's not just putting a piece of technology in. It needs to include education, feedback and monitoring. Just purchasing a system and thinking you're safe can actually lead ... to a false belief that the job's done. You need to ... use that to deliver a change. If you don't do that, you may not actually end up with any positives.”

“TIREDNESS REDUCES REACTION TIME, VIGILANCE, ALERTNESS AND CONCENTRATION SO THE ABILITY TO PERFORM ATTENTION-BASED ACTIVITIES (SUCH AS DRIVING) IS IMPAIRED. THE SPEED AT WHICH INFORMATION IS PROCESSED IS REDUCED BY TIREDNESS AND THE QUALITY OF DECISION MAKING MAY ALSO BE AFFECTED.”

ROSPA

IAM ROADSMART'S GUIDE, 'DON'T DRIVE DROWSY - HOW TO AVOID DRIVER FATIGUE', SAYS IT'S GOOD PRACTICE TO STOP AT LEAST EVERY **200 MILES** OR **TWO HOURS** OF DRIVING, BEFORE FATIGUE SETS IN.

THE MENTAL HEALTH FOUNDATION CARRIES FURTHER ADVICE, AT MENTALHEALTH.ORG.UK



Mental Health

Mental health problems are the leading cause of absence from work in the UK, with around 70 million working days lost annually at a cost of £35 billion, according to Venson fleet management solutions. It says that mental health issues such as anxiety and depression are thought to be the leading cause of work absences, accounting for up to 40% of sickness leave, and that high levels of stress are likely to be associated with a rise in the frequency of errors, that in turn can increase road crash risks.

At first sight this seems at odds with a recent DfBB survey. When questioned on the chief concerns discussed at board level, in a post COVID-19 survey, business leaders said the mental health of their employees was the biggest concern. This, said DfBB, indicated that the employee wellbeing was a primary consideration in leaders' plans to rebuild following the pandemic.

However, less than half of businesses indicated that the mental health of the workforce was reported and discussed at board level. Large firms were twice as likely as smaller firms to provide or signpost resources supporting employees' mental health during the pandemic. Almost twice as many large firms as SMEs had some form of policy that included wellbeing and health measures relating to COVID-19.

Less than one in five (18%) of SMEs, and one in three (36%) large companies had driving-for-work policies in place following the pandemic, the DfBB study of business leaders at 300 organisations found.

Rebecca Ashton believes that mental health and stress have often been ignored within the workplace. "Stress can have a dramatic effect on how we behave towards others. If we're stressed and running late for a meeting, stress levels are higher. The way you react to other road-users might be severely impacted."



“ IT IS VITAL THAT MENTAL HEALTH IS TAKEN INTO CONSIDERATION BY ORGANISATIONS. HR AND DRIVING-FOR-WORK POLICIES - TOGETHER WITH THE ENTIRE ETHOS AND FEELING WITHIN A COMPANY - NEED TO BE CORRECT BEFORE SOMEBODY FEELS THEY CAN GO TO THEIR MANAGER AND SAY, “I’M HAVING A REALLY TOUGH TIME AT THE MOMENT”. ”

**REBECCA ASHTON,
HEAD OF POLICY
AND RESEARCH,
IAM ROADSMART**





Efforts are being made to improve the situation. DfBB, for instance, linked with CALM (Campaign Against Living Miserably) to create 20,000 information packs for employers to place in vehicles, including information on access to helplines and websites. DfBB says that 125 people in the UK take their own life each week, and 75% of all UK suicides are male. "The vast majority of van drivers are also male. It's clearly an issue for commercial drivers," says DfBB's Campaign Director, Simon Turner.

Tony Greenidge adds: "Fortunately, the issue of mental wellbeing in the workplace is now getting more of the attention it deserves, but a lot of employers are still scared of it. They fear it might encourage people to open up to a level where it impacts on the capability of the business. Handled correctly, that's not the case."

In a Mercedes-Benz survey more than half of van drivers with 'poor' mental health said that increased time pressures (52%) and increased workload (50%) affected their mental health, with one in three believing job uncertainty contributed to their poor mental health. Meanwhile 17% of delivery drivers said that road congestion was impacting on their state of mind - and this was before authorities across the UK introduced 'emergency' road closures associated with COVID-19, mostly without prior consultation, resulting in increased congestion and longer journeys.

Venson said that unrealistic work schedules putting time pressure on drivers was amongst the major causes of stress that can trigger mental health problems. Other causes included:

- Traffic congestion and the behaviour of other drivers
- Increased workload/the demands of the job
- Poor work organisation and job/role uncertainty
- Poor work/life balance
- Domestic/personal issues.

As Rebecca Ashton observed in IAM RoadSmart's guide, 'Driving Business Back to Work - Safely and Profitably', "This is the strangest upheaval people have ever experienced. COVID-19 has introduced a whole new level of concern and worries for people; it is important that employees - and their bosses - know how to deal with this."

“ DESPITE A NUMBER OF HIGH-PROFILE CAMPAIGNS, MORE THAN HALF (56%) OF VAN DRIVERS AND OWNERS SAY THERE IS A STIGMA ATTACHED TO DISCUSSING MENTAL HEALTH AT WORK. ”

**BUSINESS
BAROMETER
RESEARCH FROM
MERCEDES-BENZ
VANS UK, 2018**

What employers can do:

“Work should be seen as teamwork,” says Rebecca. “It should never be allowed to become ‘them and us’. Isolation can be lessened with regular calls from a manager, or group chats. Keeping workers up to date is key. Employers must recognise that poor health is a genuine reason for people to abstain from driving in the interest of their – and others’ – health and safety.”

Simon Turner of DfBB says: “Having a driving-for-work policy is vital, as is genuine, authentic leadership, creating a culture where employees can speak out. If you say ‘you can speak out’ but the culture is obviously one where you can’t, it doesn’t work. It can’t be just words; leaders must mean what they say and be seen to mean it, or drivers will spot you a mile away.”

“Drivers need to be encouraged to speak to someone. They need to unload their feelings and discuss what is going wrong. Employers need to work harder to foster a culture where that is both encouraged and accepted. Drivers could be concerned about all manner of issues that aren’t even work-related. It could be their health, the health of family or friends, job security and businesses struggling or financial worries. Your mind can easily wander to those things while you’re driving, impairing concentration, decision making and reaction time.”

Venson: “Employers should have a duty of care policy to ensure work does not harm an individual’s physical or mental health.”

Tony Greenidge believes that - especially during the pandemic - employees’ job specifications often became blurred. “It’s been a case of ‘all hands to the pump’ and this can cause confusion. Workers’ roles may have expanded unduly; employers should review this now and adjust where necessary. Misunderstandings can lead to confusion, overwork and stress.”

What employees can do

Simon Turner: “Drivers should be responsible grown-ups and learn to speak out - but of course there has to be a culture that allows them to do so without feeling weak.”

Venson: “If struggling to cope with stress, whether work-related, behind the wheel or in everyday life, employees should talk to their employer and it may be a good idea to organise a GP visit for help.”

RoSPA says that as a driver or rider, employees must play their part by ensuring that they are properly licensed, insured for work, fit to drive, plan their journeys safely and comply with traffic laws.

Employees should consult IAM RoadSmart’s ‘Tips for managing driver stress’ and ‘Looking after your mental health post-lockdown’ for additional advice.



“ IT CAN’T BE JUST WORDS; LEADERS MUST MEAN WHAT THEY SAY AND BE SEEN TO MEAN IT, OR DRIVERS WILL SPOT YOU A MILE AWAY ”

**SIMON TURNER,
DRIVING FOR
BETTER BUSINESS**

“ EMPLOYEES AND EMPLOYERS SHOULD ASK; ‘IS THIS MEETING NECESSARY TO HAVE FACE-TO-FACE? OR CAN WE CUT TIME AND STRESS BY HOLDING IT ONLINE?’ ”

REBECCA ASHTON

TIPS AND ADVICE FOR BUSINESSES AND EMPLOYEES CAN BE FOUND AT IAMROADSMART.COM/BUSINESS



Physical Health

Post-Covid challenges aren't just psychological; there are physical side-effects too. Sliding job specifications may have resulted in workers shouldering longer, more tiring shifts and workers whose colleagues have been furloughed might have taken on other additional - tiring - work.

What employers can do

Managers should keep an eye out for signs of persistent poor physical health and encourage employees to seek professional advice.

In addition, says IAM RoadSmart, employers should ensure that they communicate with employees by:

- Issuing regular reminders on issues including medical declarations to DVLA, where necessary, and recommendations for annual eyesight tests, rather than leaving these to the employee to arrange.
- Fostering a culture that makes employees feel empowered to prioritise physical health, while engaging with them to find ways of making their jobs safer. This could be achieved through improved procedures as well as better PPE, working hours and shift patterns.

Neil Greig says: "Employers can make a big difference by shifting the focus of safety training away from mere compliance and onto employee wellbeing. This could be achieved by issuing e-learning on how to set up your workstation correctly, for instance, with the aim not just of ticking a box, but actually preventing workers from getting backache."

Neil says that employers should not simply identify signs of poor physical health, but also understand that physical health problems may have links with mental health, possibly in combination with fatigue and poor lifestyle - which can often be exacerbated by bad working practices such as long hours spent driving.

"It is worth remembering that physical injury to employees also imposes a cost on the business in terms of lost productivity," says Neil.



REMEMBERING AND CARRYING OUT IAM ROADSMART'S 'POWDERY' CHECKS MAKES FOR A GOOD STARTING POINT FOR ANY JOURNEY:



POWER



OIL



WATER



DAMAGE



ELECTRICS



RUBBER



YOU

YOU MAY HAVE CHECKED THE CONDITION OF YOUR VEHICLE, BUT HOW OFTEN DO YOU CONSIDER THE MOST IMPORTANT COMPONENT: THE DRIVER? ARE YOU FEELING TIRED, STRESSED OR UNWELL? ARE YOU ON ANY MEDICATION THAT MIGHT IMPAIR YOUR CONCENTRATION OR YOUR ABILITY TO REMAIN IN CONTROL?

What employees can do

"We should all take some responsibility for our physical as well as mental wellbeing," says Rebecca Ashton. "We can't expect somebody else to do it all for us. We should be able to expect help if we need it but we have to notice when we're feeling stressed or not on top of our game - and not be embarrassed to say."

RoSPA says that drivers or riders should play their part by ensuring they are not only compliant but also fit to drive, and that they plan their journeys safely.

Certain medical conditions must also be declared to DVLA. Other important references for drivers include IAM RoadSmart advice on the importance of eyesight checks and in-cab ergonomics .



RESPONSIBILITY

IAM RoadSmart is concerned that there are far too few prosecutions for serious failures in the management of work-related driver risk.

“We are beginning to feel it’s a bit of an urban myth that if an employee has a collision, the police or HSE will launch an audit trail leading right back to the employer, then take them to court. If that’s happening, why don’t we hear about it?” asks Tony Greenidge. “I’ve never met an organisation that’s been subject to such an inquiry.”

One notable exception occurred in 2020 when a judge fined welding specialists Renown Consultants £450,000 and ordered it to pay £300,000 in costs after it failed to ensure the safety of its drivers.

Two workers died when one of them fell asleep at the wheel of a work van, while driving back to Doncaster after a night shift in Stevenage. The vehicle hit a truck parked in a layby on the A1 and caught fire.

The previous day one of the two workers left Doncaster at 4.30am and drove to Alnmouth, Northumberland, arriving at 7.30am to carry out work on the railway. The expected work did not take place, so after waiting until midday he started the drive back to Renown’s Doncaster depot, arriving at 3pm, as reported by Fleet News (<http://bit.ly/3aP8kyn>).

On his way to the depot he was asked to take on an overnight welding job in Stevenage and, with the other worker, set off from the depot at 7.18pm arriving at the site at 9.47pm. The two men undertook welding jobs from 11.15pm leaving the site once they had finished at 3.40am. The crash occurred at around 5.30am as they headed back to Doncaster.

The Office of Rail and Road (ORR) found serious and systemic failings to manage fatigue and Renown was found guilty following a trial at Nottingham Crown Court. In sentencing Renown, Judge Godsmark said that, while fleet safety policies were in place, operations managers paid “lip service” to them.

IAM RoadSmart says there should be more prosecutions for failing to ensure worker wellbeing and they should be handled by the police and HSE. It wants the outcomes publicised as a deterrent.

“When you consider that a third of road safety deaths are people on business driving, hundreds of organisations a year should be subjected to a thorough police audit trail and prosecution - where are these cases?” asks Tony.

“ ONLY ABOUT 5-10% OF FLEETS ACTUALLY HAVE A REALLY PROACTIVE, PROGRESSIVE, ENGAGING DRIVER RISK MANAGEMENT POLICY THAT PUTS EMPLOYEES AT THE HEART OF MATTERS. ”

TONY GREENIDGE





Neil Greig adds: “More prosecutions depend on having more specific legislation in place first, governing the health and wellbeing of workers. Currently it is too general. We will not get the enforcement authorities acting until they have tighter laws to enforce.”

IAM RoadSmart suggests that tachograph and drivers' hours regulations for HGVs should apply to van drivers too and - ultimately - to company car drivers. “There should be a specific requirement on employers to ensure they don't force workers to do too many hours a day. That would have to be clearly defined and similar to what we have for HGVs,” says Neil.

Tougher procurement policies could also force organisations to adopt stricter driving for work and employee wellbeing policies, says IAM RoadSmart. “Highways England stipulates that unless organisations meet certain standards, they can't work for them. This should become standard practice,” says Neil. “It would be a huge leap forward for road safety.

“If companies lose work because they have a reputation for making drivers work for too long, or not having a driving-for-work policy, that would soon have an effect, although not for smaller companies and sole traders.”

IAM RoadSmart wants the Government to take on responsibility for overhauling motorway and A-road rest area provision. It believes some drivers are deterred from stopping for essential rests because food, drink and fuel prices are too high at many motorway service areas.

“Less expensive, French-style informal rest areas are required, particularly on the A-road network,” adds Neil. “As we emerge from the pandemic with more emphasis on driver wellbeing, now is the time.”

Simon Turner adds: “Even if you're not the sort of person who would have taken into account driver wellbeing before COVID-19, you can't avoid the fact that it's an issue now. Increasingly we see CEOs and business owners looking to better manage road risk because it's the right thing to do.”

RoSPA says businesses should bear responsibility for improving wellbeing in the gig economy. It says that firms should conduct risk assessments to properly identify risks and implement measures to ensure workers are properly trained, have appropriate safety equipment and are not incentivised to take actions which may increase the risk of harm to them or others.

Conclusion

IAM RoadSmart believes that the UK's emergence from the COVID-19 pandemic presents a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to improve, clarify and recalibrate the link between employee wellbeing and road safety.

"People have finally become far more aware of just how tough some aspects of working life can be," says Rebecca Ashton. "IAM RoadSmart would like to think that the care many companies have shown due to COVID-19 will continue and help organisations thrive as we all move forward together."

IAM RoadSmart believes that major improvements to road safety can be delivered through the following developments:

- Police and HSE more vigorously pursue prosecutions of organisations which fail to prioritise employee wellbeing.
- Legislation is tightened, more clearly defining employers' responsibility for worker wellbeing, and enabling successful prosecutions.
- Business meetings must undergo permanent change. "If lockdown has taught us nothing else, it's that if you can have an efficient online meeting instead of a stressful, five or six-hour round trip along the motorway, you should do so," says Tony Greenidge.
- All drivers need less costly motorway services, and better provision of A-road rest areas, to help cut fatigue.
- Now is the time to double down on training. "Safe driving is less expensive driving - and as we begin to emerge from the shadow of COVID-19 it's the right time to invest in that," says Tony. "E-learning is a very cost-effective, simple way to get important messages across to people, that can even be done in the comfort of their own home. It would be a false economy to skimp on this as we emerge from COVID-19. Powerful messages can efficiently be imparted to drivers, and that includes the link between wellbeing and road safety. Online training can also identify those that potentially have wellbeing or safety problems, enabling limited resources to be efficiently targeted."
- Organisations must re-appraise the vanishing role of fleet manager. "There are fleets with 2-300 drivers who don't have a fleet manager and that is an essential role for ensuring safety, training and communication with the workforce," says Tony. "It became highly visible during the recent crisis. A dedicated professional fleet manager adds significant value to a business as well as crucial safeguards around wellbeing and training."

Neil Greig adds: "The good news is that the health and wellbeing debate has acquired more energy because of COVID-19. We shouldn't just go back to normal; it's an opportunity to build better. If we're complacent, things will fast return to normal."

Tony Greenidge concludes: "By enabling us all to talk more openly about health and wellbeing, both physical and mental, COVID-19 marked a turning point. "It has shone a spotlight on the stresses and strains of those who worked through the pandemic, as well as those furloughed. We must now seize this opportunity and run with it."

TAKE POSITIVE ACTION ON DRIVER HEALTH

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