



How to deal with Hazards

Driving is probably the most dangerous activity most of us participate in during our normal day to day living, understanding the risks involved along with a positive attitude it is possible to share the Public roads safely with drivers of differing abilities and attitudes who are in charge of wide verity of vehicles.

You as a driver have responsibility to your family, your passengers, other road users and above all yourself to ensure that you arrive at your intended destination intact and safe.

Once you have mastered the basic skills of vehicle control, the safe driving is all about improving your awareness of what is happening on the road. Better understanding of the situations will increase your awareness and therefore improve your judgements and ability to cope, so reducing the risk of accidents.



Perception of your own ability and attitude towards other road users will have a big influence on how you behave behind the steering wheel, this and can effect not only other road users safety but your safety every as well.



Your day to day driving will be effected by many factors that may have noting to do with the task of driving, for example you may be driving home after a long stressful day at work your body wants to rest but you have to make the journey. Your attention to the road will be limited and should a situating arise suddenly that requires your instant reaction you will not be able to respond in time. Using your mobile or arguing with someone or being distracted by unrelated activity on the road has the same effect. Use of alcohol, drugs, or some medicines has the effect of slowing down your reactions and therefore increasing the likelihood of a mishap.



Ten road deaths and one hundred serious road injuries occur on UK roads daily, that's equivalent to ten jumbo jets crashing every year killing everybody onboard. Imagine the cause was identified as a combination of tired pilots; aggressive pilots frustrated by delays jumping the queue for take-off and landing slots; pilots disregarding safety instructions or directions given by air traffic control, imagine the public outcry.



Understanding and allowing for the limitations of your vehicle has a large part to play in you being able to handle the vehicle in any given situation. For example, you are traveling behind a large goods vehicle at 30mph, the highway code advises that you should allow minimum space of 23meters for your crash avoidance stop, you have not allowed the required space, a the lorry stops abruptly in front of you, what do you think is going to happen next?.



Attitude

Many drivers who are too fast, aggressive and inconsiderate; they do not perceive themselves as being unsafe. They're happy with the way they drive, their own attitude is okay and there is no need to change, the problem is with others on the road.

The attitude determines how knowledge and skills are used. It shapes our style towards being co-operative or competitive and therefore how safely and well we drive. Developing correct attitude is the key to safe driving. As humans there are many reasons as to the way we behave, generally our behavior is influenced by our experiences and the effect others have on us. At the onset of your driving your instructor will have had the most influence in developing your attitude on the roads, as you develop your skills your parents, friends and people you mix with will influence your behavior and attitude.

It is a recognized fact that a defensive driving technique with good hazard perception skills together with positive attitude and behavior is the foundation to all safe driving.

What is hazard?

Hazard is any activity on the roads that will require you to change your speed or direction; hazards can be generalized in the following categories.

Static hazard stationary feature of the road that will not change such as a junction, bend roundabouts, crossings etc

Dynamic hazards there are six categories of moving hazards pedestrians, cyclists, motorcyclist, animals, car drivers and large vehicles.

Environmental hazards_(weather, visibility, or condition of the road surface i.e. wet, ice, loose surface)'

How to deal with hazards

To deal with hazards safely use the following technique. Scan, perceive, plan, prioritize, and perform.



Scanning is to look well ahead, not just at the back end of the vehicle in front of you but well into the far horizon. Keep your eyes moving all the time into near, middle and far distance. Check your rear view mirror, door mirrors, and blind spots. Look for any activity that may cause you to alter your speed or direction.



Perceiving is to work out what is likely to happen next.

Look at the picture above, look at the overall view of what is going on. In the far distance you see a bus, in the middle distance you see two taxis and a set of traffic lights, and in the near distance you see cyclist and a white panel van. Do you see any dangers?

Have another look at the picture, what is the imminent danger?

What is likely to happen as you approach the traffic lights?

What is likely to happen as you approach the bus?

There are many permutations as to what can happen, for example if you consider the near view you will notice that the vans hazard lights are on therefore the area around the van is the most likely to cause a problem, i.e. a pedestrian could run out in front of the van, the passenger side door could fling open.

If you consider the middle distance, the traffic lights could change.

If you consider the far distance, the bus is facing in the opposite direction to the flow of traffic, implying that either the one way system is reverting to a normal two way road or there is a contra flow bus lane in operation. If the cyclist continues on his present path and continues heading towards the bus, what is likely to happen.

All the above could have happened in about six seconds if you were driving at the speed limit of that particular road (30mph).

Planning is to organize yourself so that you are expecting the worst and you are prepared to act if the worst case scenario develops, for example a pedestrian suddenly running out in front of the van.

Prioritize is to focus on the imminent danger and deal with it before it becomes actual danger. Referring to picture above. The two immediate dangers are that the passenger side door on the van might fly open, or that a pedestrian could run out in front of the van, therefore you need to be actively looking for clues such as looking in the vans door mirror to see if there is a passenger in the van. You should also pay particular attention to the blind area in front of the van for any pedestrian activity.

Perform is to take account of what is happening around you and to take action in good time to avoid any sudden speed and direction changes. Use the **MPSL** routine.