

Guidance Note, GN027

DRIVING ON UNIVERSITY BUSINESS

Many different types of vehicles are driven by staff and by students on University business. They range from large tractors and vans through minibuses to cars, including cars owned by the University, cars which are rented and cars which are privately owned by members of staff.

It might be argued that driving is one of the most hazardous tasks performed by staff while at work. The numbers of people killed or seriously injured each year while driving in connection with their work is many times higher than the total numbers killed or seriously injured at work from other causes.

The guidance below is intended to help Schools and Support Services make sure that their local health and safety arrangements give appropriate attention to driver safety.

The main elements of a driver road safety programme are:

- DRIVERS: Making sure that drivers are competent and fit to drive and that they are covered by appropriate motor insurance;
- VEHICLES: Making sure that vehicles are fit for purpose and properly maintained;
- JOURNEYS: Making sure that journey schedules are realistic and that, coupled with other demands on individuals, do not put them at risk from fatigue;
- PHONES: Discouraging the use of all types of mobile phone while driving.



DRIVERS

Those driving vehicles which are owned by the University or which have been leased or rented must have completed a Driver's Declaration and received written confirmation (usually provided by email) that it has been accepted by the University. This is the means by which they are authorised to drive University vehicles so that they can then be covered by the University's motor insurance. In the case of rented vehicles, the hire company's own insurance can be taken out as an alternative to renting the vehicle under the University's insurance.

Those driving their own vehicles on University business must have extended their motor insurance policies to cover business use. Even driving for a short distance in the course of the working day in connection with University activities is business use. For example, driving from Foresterhill or the Rowett to Old Aberdeen to attend a meeting or a training course would be regarded as business use.

If there were to be an accident during the journey and the driver's motor policy had not been extended, the insurance company could argue that the journey was business use and that it was not covered by the policy. The driver would then be uninsured and would be faced with the consequences which could be complex, expensive and involve criminal charges. (In deciding whether a journey in a private vehicle is deemed to be business use it does not matter whether the driver is claiming a mileage allowance through expenses for the journey.)

Members of staff who passed their car driving tests during 1997 or later and who want to drive minibuses on University business must first take a further driving test to add the minibus category to their driving licenses. Those who passed their car driving tests before 1997 will be allowed to drive minibuses on University business but they must first complete a defensive driving course approved by the University. See [University guidance on minibus use](#)

VEHICLES

University owned/leased vehicles should be under a regime of daily and weekly safety checks in addition to the maintenance recommendations specified by the vehicle manufacturer. See [University guidance on vehicle maintenance](#)

Hired vehicles and the privately owned vehicles of members of staff should be checked and maintained by the driver in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations.

JOURNEYS

Schools and Support Services as well as drivers themselves should recognise their responsibilities to ensure that road journeys are planned to reduce the risks of driver fatigue. The following should always be considered

- Driver fatigue on long journeys and on journeys undertaken at the end of a long or demanding working day during which there have not been opportunities to rest;
- Whether an overnight stay or use of an alternative form of transport would be appropriate;
- The need to take adequate rest breaks during journeys;
- Driver fatigue if a road journey is undertaken immediately after a long-haul flight;
- Making sure that drivers, particularly minibus drivers, are able to give their full attention to driving and are not also having to discuss the day's activities with students.

We have deliberately not provided limits on driving hours as circumstances in which people need to drive on University business vary considerably across the University. Instead it is left to drivers and their line managers to plan the working day to avoid driver fatigue. If necessary Schools and Support Services can take advice from the University Safety Advisers. See [Guidance from ROSPA on planning journeys](#).

PHONES

It is illegal to use hand-held phones while driving in the UK but law does permit the use of hands-free phones. However many argue that the main safety risk with mobile phones comes not from holding the phone but from concentrating on a discussion over the phone at the same time as trying to concentrate on driving the vehicle.

Having a conversation over the phone, it is said, is very different from having a



conversation with a passenger who is alongside the driver in the vehicle and who can appreciate why there might be pauses in the conversation while the driver gives his/her full attention to particular hazards on the road ahead.

It has been shown that use of a phone (either hand-held or hands-free) tends to result in:

- Unpredictable variations in vehicle speed;
- More drifting within lane;
- Slower reaction time;
- More missed events;
- Poor decision making;
- Reduced situation awareness.

See [Guidance from ROSPA on using mobile phones](#).

It is against the law to use a hand-held phone while driving and the University expects staff to uphold the law when driving a vehicle on University business. While it is legal to use hands-free phones, the University strongly discourages the use of hands-free phones while driving on University business. Members of staff should not be expected to answer calls while driving but instead phones should divert to voicemail (i.e. by not being answered) and the calls returned when the driver can stop in a safe place.

ACTION REQUIRED

Schools and Support Services should make their staff aware of the above advice and ensure that necessary guidance is included in their local health and safety policies/handbooks.