

Summer driving

Summer driving brings unique driving challenges: more vehicles on the road, more children playing outside, more cyclists and motorcycles. Travel times are longer and traffic jams more likely.

Introduction

Those who manage drivers need to be aware of these issues and work schedules should be planned accordingly. As well as planning for the eventuality of holiday traffic jams, there needs to be a focus on the vehicle's condition. Detailed information should be provided to drivers on allergies, preventing fatigue and minimizing glare from the sun.

The following information should prove useful for managers to communicate to drivers and maintenance teams.

Vehicle maintenance

Maintaining vehicles in summer is as important as any other time of year. Check that air conditioning systems are working effectively and check vehicle coolant levels.

Windscreen smears caused by insects can impair visibility so windscreens need to be kept clean. Make sure the windshield washer reservoir is kept full and that additional bottles of windshield washer fluid are kept in the vehicle.

Checking tires for damage and tread depth is also very important as hot weather increases the risk of puncture and sudden summer showers can leave road surfaces flooded or slippery.

Allergy season

Hay fever causes itchy and watery eyes, blocked and running noses, and sneezing, which can cause a real distraction to drivers.

Advise affected drivers to use non-drowsy antihistamines such as Claritin and Cetirizine, and keep a good supply of tissues in the cabin. Dehydration can make symptoms worse so a bottle of water should be kept in the vehicle.

Managers should also ensure that drivers:

- > Regularly vacuum the vehicle cab to remove pollen.
- > Are provided with weather warnings when pollen counts are expected to be high.
- > Provide vehicle purifiers and ionizers to reduce pollen particles in the vehicle cab.

The Country Code

Remind your drivers to be careful near farm tractors. They do not need indicators for daytime driving and can turn unexpectedly. They can also have frontloaders so overtaking may take longer than expected. They should keep in mind that the mud tractors leave on the road can be extremely slippery after rain.

Drivers should also be reminded to take care around RVs and caravans by allowing enough space and being patient.

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Warm weather fatigue

Your drivers are more likely to feel fatigued in the warmer summer months. To help combat fatigue, commercial vehicle drivers should take regular breaks, ideally every two hours, even if it's a shorter journey.

Drivers should be advised to avoid eating a heavy meal before driving (chewing gum can stop yawning) and to drink a cup of coffee when necessary.

Avoid the glare

Glare from the sun can cause road accidents. Wearing the correct sunglasses can help reduce glare and keep the drivers seeing clearly. It is recommended that your drivers have their eyes tested by an optician every 2 years. If a driver requires prescription lenses their sunglasses should have the same prescription lenses.

Some lenses in sunglasses are not suitable for use by drivers. Class 4 lenses let through little light and are not suitable for driving use. Class 1, 2 and 3 lenses let through adequate light for use in the day but not at night and Class 0 lenses have no limitations but have over 80% light transmission. Managers should check that drivers have the correct type of lenses in their sunglasses. Design features like deep arms should also be avoided as they obstruct periphery vision.

Summary of key points

Driving in the summer comes with unique seasonal challenges the same way winter driving does. It is recommended that managers raise the awareness of their drivers on the issues highlighted in this guidance note.

Managers should advise the following action:

- > Consider the chance of traffic jams caused by those driving to their cottage or other holiday destination as part of their vacation.
- > Check that drivers who need corrective lenses also have prescription lens sunglasses tinted to an acceptable standard.
- > Remind professional drivers about fatigue prevention techniques, including taking regular breaks.
- > Look at vehicle maintenance and inspection regimes from a summer driving viewpoint including checking that air conditioning systems are working effectively.
- > Monitor pollen count forecasts and work with drivers to mitigate and minimize the effects of hay fever.

Following this guidance note, including vehicle maintenance, driver fatigue and mitigating the effects of seasonal allergies can help your drivers to keep their focus on the roads, thereby helping to prevent driving at work accidents.

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