

The Hazards of Driving - Have you Risk Assessed and Trained Your Drivers? -

Introduction

We live in an increasingly mobile culture and economy. We require our staff to travel increasingly greater distances, often with tight deadlines, and during these periods of travel expect them to undertake many other aspects of their duties, including taking telephone calls, arranging meetings and continuing with their administrative commitments. This is now all made possible because of the advances in technology, mobile phones, wireless networking for computers and remote access of emails. This increasing mobility within our workforces leads to an increase in hazards, both physical and health hazards.

For example:-

- Lack of concentration while driving due to the fact that a mobile phone is ringing can lead to an increase in frequency of accidents.
- An increase in psychological pressure (stress) in an employee may present as an increased frequency of non-serious road traffic accidents.
- Reducing the travelling time in order to make deadlines or meetings can place an employee at increased risk of road traffic accidents.

It is important that not only are such activities appropriately risk assessed, but that staff are given simple advice and techniques to overcome the worst pressures placed upon them of their increasing mobility. Such an initiative can literally save lives.

A recent research project carried out within the United Kingdom indicated the following findings:-

- ◆ Drivers were more pressured in the evenings than in the morning.
- ◆ Older drivers found driving less stressful than younger drivers.
- ◆ Older drivers coped better and were more relaxed in traffic jams and with delays.
- ◆ Younger drivers experienced more symptoms of anxiety towards the end of the working week.
- ◆ Older drivers showed their highest levels of anxiety in the middle of the working week.

Research indicates that pressure on drivers has a number of components:-

- Aggression of other drivers.
- An individual's dislike of driving.
- Issues associated with overtaking.
- Increased alertness and requirements for concentration.

The main sources of psychological pressure have been identified as:-

- Bad weather conditions.
- Poor road conditions.
- An increase in the volume of traffic.
- Attempting to keep to a tight time schedule.
- Domestic pressures outside the workplace.
- The behaviour of other drivers.

Simple tips to manage the hazards and risks of travelling, particularly driving:-

- Be prepared for other drivers to drive erratically and aggressively.
- Be tolerant. Anger is bad for you.
- Accept that travel delays are a fact of life.
- Use any aggression and anger to focus on an alternative activity, such as sport.
- If you do not like driving use alternative forms of transport from time to time. If you are young consider this towards the end of the week. If you are older consider this in the middle of the week.
- Use your car radio, tape or CD player as a way of relaxing while driving.
- If you have recently had an argument take time before you drive.
- Create a driving diary. Review your week's driving schedule and attempt to identify particularly stressful situations.
- Consciously drive slower for example at 60mph instead of 70mph.
- Use the inside lanes on motorways.
- Plan your journeys in easy stages.
- Do not drive for more than 3 hours at a time.

You may wish to incorporate this information in a company leaflet or as part of your training programme, incorporated in an article for your in-house employee magazine or use it on your company intranet.

If you would like any help with any of these initiatives please do not hesitate to contact us at Preventative Healthcare talk2us@phcohealth.co.uk.

NEW CLINIC

PHC now has a clinic in Crawley, West Sussex

If you would like one of your employees seen at our new clinic in Crawley, please contact your PHC Contract Support Administrator who will make the necessary arrangements. If you are unsure who your PHC Contract Support Administrator is just contact us via our main switchboard and they will put you through.