

Ensuring Driver Competence

While organisations should, in the first instance seek to control risk on the road by reducing or eliminating the need to travel by this mode or by designing safe journeys and specifying safe vehicles, wherever driving is part of work, they must ensure that employees involved have the necessary competence to drive safely. Competence for safe driving is about ensuring appropriate attitudes as well as behaviour, particularly as driving for work can often entail lone driving, without reference to supervisors or other colleagues, over prolonged periods.

The following ten-point code has been produced in order to supplement Road Safety guidance and to help organisations review their policies and arrangements for ensuring the competence of their drivers to drive safely.

Ten Point Code on Ensuring Driver Competence

1) Commitment to Safe Driving Competence

As part of its overall commitment to manage occupational road risk, the organization should have clear statements in place which indicate that, notwithstanding its commitment to reduce risk on the road by all other reasonably practicable means, it will take steps to ensure the competence of its employees to drive safely whenever they are required to drive vehicles as part of their job.

2) Raising Awareness

The organisation should ensure that, its policy on driver competence and development (including fitness to drive and knowing what to do in an accident or emergency) is communicated effectively to all its employees, that it is backed by appropriate publicity and that awareness of the issues involved is maintained through regular communications and feedback.

3) Continuous Improvement

The organisation should make it clear that it wishes to achieve a record of continuous improvement in individual, group and corporate standards of driving competence.

4) Driver Assessment

Drivers' competence to drive safely should be assessed at interview and/or prior to the allocation of driving tasks. Assessment should take account of the driver's attitude, road safety knowledge and driving skills at the wheel as well other evidence such as age, experience, accident and enforcement history (including penalty points status) and past training record.

5) Minimum Standards

The organisation should set appropriate standards of competence to drive safely to be met by employees before they can drive vehicles on the road for work purposes, recognising that: driving skills deteriorate with time; possession of driving licence of itself does not necessarily imply such competence; and that the risk of accidents is also related to the amount and type of driving which employees are required to undertake. (The organisation may also choose to apply such standards to any other named drivers of its vehicles.)

6) Prioritised Driver Development

The organisation should put in place a prioritised programme of driver development, including defensive driving training, that is designed to meet the development needs of those staff with greatest needs (for example, based on evidence from driver assessment, amount and type of driving, accident and enforcement history and so on.)

7) Targets

Targets for improvement in assessed standards of driving competence should be set for individuals, key groups and/or for the whole organisation.

8) Leadership by Example

All managers should make a personal commitment to lead the policy by example, in emphasising the importance of driving competence to colleagues, in identifying the level of competence that they seek to achieve themselves by training and in their everyday driving behaviour.

9) Recognition of Achievement

The organisation should ensure that personal achievement in developing and maintaining driving competence is recognised and commended to colleagues. For example through issuing of certificates of assessed training achievement to individuals and/or groups, by use of awards schemes and by other suitable means which make such achievement visible to key audiences.

10) Monitoring and Review

The organisation should have effective arrangements in place to monitor the implementation and effectiveness of their policy on driver development, including:

- Monitoring adherence to assessment procedures and delivery of training;
- Monitoring the driving behaviour of its employees on roads (for example, by studying feedback from drivers, use of 'road watch' schemes, monitoring of licences for evidence of road traffic offences, use of technology etc.);
- Identifying the extent of any shortfall in driver competence revealed by accident and incident investigation; and
- Reviewing the impact of training on accident rates.