

# Safe Driving for Work Driver's Handbook



## **Our Vision:**

Influence a sustainable reduction in the numbers of people killed or seriously injured or who suffer illness as a result of driving for work in all economic sectors

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# Acknowledgement

This handbook has been jointly developed by An Garda Síochána, the Health and Safety Authority and the Road Safety Authority as a tool for working drivers to help them understand and manage the risks that they face and create when driving for work. It will help working drivers make safer choices about the way they drive and behave around vehicles.

This is a guidance document. Using the information given should help you to comply with your statutory duties in respect of safe driving for work practices. The document is not exhaustive and provides information, in no particular order, on the main risks that working drivers may encounter, as part of their work practices.

All information contained in this document is accurate at the time of publication. It is the responsibility of the reader to update his/herself regularly on any changes to Road Traffic or Safety, Health and Welfare at Work legislation that may be relevant to driving for work. More detailed information on general road safety topics can be found at [www.garda.ie](http://www.garda.ie) or [www.rsa.ie](http://www.rsa.ie). Information on worker safety, health and welfare can be found at [www.hsa.ie](http://www.hsa.ie).

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Údarás Um Shábháilteacht Ar Bhóithre  
Road Safety Authority

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# Introduction

The purpose of this handbook is to make working drivers aware of some of the main risks that they may face or create while driving for work.

In terms of understanding how to manage the risks, the handbook outlines what is required of a driver in terms of his or her, vehicle, journey and driving behaviours. In addition it deals with emergency situations and gives practical advice on what to do to help keep you safe from avoidable harm.

This handbook will help you work with your employer to avoid preventable incidents and injuries to yourself, your passengers and other people when driving for work. It should be used with your employer's driving for work policies and procedures.

Driving is an essential part of work life for many people. It can be enjoyable and pleasant, but it can also be stressful and dangerous. Driving is one of the most dangerous activities that people do. Every year in Ireland many people are killed and seriously injured while driving for work. Thousands suffer serious injury each year. Most of these horrific incidents were preventable.

Between 1996 and 2010 over 4412 cars, 511 vans and 846 trucks were involved in fatal collisions on Ireland's roads. In addition 14638 cars, 1513 vans and 1563 trucks were involved in serious injury collisions. It is estimated that up to 1/3 of road collisions involve a vehicle used in connection with work activity.

There are many safer choices that can be made to make sure that you do not become involved in an incident or road collision when driving for work.

At-work drivers have a higher collision rate than the general driving population, even after their higher mileages are taken into account. Drivers of company cars, vans, buses and HGV's are more likely to take risks and to be at fault when they have a driving incident.

This is not just due to driving skills and attitudes, but may also be due to the nature of the driving that at-work drivers do, the vehicles they drive and the amount of time spent behind the wheel or on the road. The greater the time spent behind the wheel, the greater the exposure to risks associated with driving for work. If you drive more than 40,000 kilometres per year, you are considered to be at high risk of having a collision.



Young at-work drivers in particular may find themselves driving vehicles (such as vans) in which they did not learn to drive and have little or no experience of driving.

The joint HSA and RSA Employer Guidance on Driving for Work reminds employers that health and safety law applies to driving for work in the same way as for all work activities. Driving risks should be effectively managed within the safety management system that employers should have in place for managing all work related risks.

*By law, your employer needs to make sure, that when you are driving for work, you are:*

- ▲ Legally entitled to drive the vehicle you are using
- ▲ Using a vehicle that is safe and roadworthy
- ▲ Properly informed, trained, competent and fit to drive it safely
- ▲ Using the vehicle safely [as per manufacturer's and employer instructions]





# Summary

For ease of reference the handbook is divided into four clearly marked sections and each section is briefly outlined below;

## Safe Driver

Drivers must hold a valid driving licence for the vehicle being driven and carry it while driving. It is vitally important to understand and obey all the rules of the road and to update yourself regularly on road safety. Drivers have an individual responsibility for their driving behaviour. Drivers must assess their fitness to drive. Never drink and drive. Never drive under the influence of drugs [prescribed or over-the counter]. Never drive when tired. Drivers must wear a seat belt on every journey.

## Safe Journey

Before setting off, always plan your route and check for weather and traffic updates. Always drive at the appropriate speed for the prevailing conditions. Always use daytime running lights and slow down or even cancel your journey in severe weather conditions [rain, fog, high winds, ice or snow]

## Safe Vehicle

Always carry out a vehicle pre-check before using your vehicle. This should be done daily and a more detailed check should be carried out weekly or as prescribed by your employer. Make sure loads are securely stowed or fastened in the vehicle. If carrying loads on the vehicle, loads must be appropriately stowed and restrained to prevent any movement during transit.

## Dealing with Collisions and Emergencies

Personal safety and the safety of any passengers should always be your first consideration. Use your hazard warning lights and hi-visibility clothing to make sure you and your vehicle can be seen by other road users. Collisions that result in injury while driving for work should be reported to the Gardai, as appropriate [refer to Appendix 1], and your line manager immediately. Details should be recorded on a preliminary incident report form.



# Safe Driver

As a driver, you must play your part by making sure that you are fit to carry out your driving duties. You should plan your journeys safely and obey occupational health and safety, and road traffic laws when driving for work. You also need to understand and follow your employer's driving for work policies, procedures and rules.

## Driver Training

Drivers should consider maintaining their skill and knowledge by undergoing regular refresher training. Your employer may have specific vehicle familiarisation or refresher training procedures in place. When required to drive a vehicle with which you are not familiar take time to inform yourself on the safe operation of that vehicle type before going on any journey.

## Driver Qualification and Authorisation

As part of driving for work policy and procedures, you should be authorised to drive for work by your employer and you should submit the following documentation to your employer to verify that you are suitably qualified and authorised to drive:-

- ✓ Valid driving licence for the category of vehicle
- ✓ Driving licence endorsements or penalties
- ✓ Proof of insurance and type of use
- ✓ Details of any medical conditions related to driving

**ALL DRIVERS MUST CARRY A VALID NATIONAL OR  
INTERNATIONAL DRIVING LICENCE  
FAILURE TO DO SO IS AN OFFENCE**

## Knowledge of rules of the road

You must have a satisfactory knowledge of the rules of the road to get a driving licence, but learning about road safety does not stop once you pass your test. Drivers must regularly update themselves on road safety rules. It is recommended that drivers refresh their understanding of the rules of the road at least once a year by visiting [www.rulesoftheroad.ie](http://www.rulesoftheroad.ie)

## Fitness to Drive

You should report to work fit for all work activities including driving duties. If you are not fit for work, it is your responsibility to inform your manager.

Your physical health, psychological and emotional state and your general attitude towards driving play a major part in your fitness to drive. You should inform your employer about any health issue or personal circumstances that may affect your driving (your employer may require this).

*It is important to remember that your fitness to drive can be negatively affected by:*

- ▲ Fatigue
- ▲ Alcohol
- ▲ Drugs [over the counter, prescription or illicit]
- ▲ Temporary illness
- ▲ A medical condition
- ▲ Daily stress events

## Fatigue

Fatigue is a major contributory cause of fatal and serious injury vehicle collisions and incidents.

Thousands of crashes are caused by tired drivers. They are usually severe because a sleeping driver cannot brake or take avoidance action, so the impact generally occurs at high speed. Fatigue related collisions often result in very serious injuries or death.

*You are most likely to feel sleepy when driving:*

- ▲ On long journeys on monotonous roads
- ▲ Between 2am and 6am
- ▲ Between 2pm and 4pm
- ▲ After having less sleep than normal
- ▲ After drinking alcohol
- ▲ After taking medicines which cause drowsiness
- ▲ On journeys home after night shifts
- ▲ On journeys after a very long working day

**DO NOT CONTINUE TO DRIVE IF YOU ARE SUFFERING FROM FATIGUE**

**TIREDNESS KILLS, IT COULD BE YOU**

### Measures to tackle driver fatigue

Most, if not all, of the risk could be avoided by awareness and planning. You can counteract fatigue in a number of ways.



## Measures to tackle driver fatigue

Reduce road journeys

Avoid driving by:

- Using the phone, email, video-conferencing or public transport to do business
- Car-sharing to reduce number of journeys you take

Avoid the most dangerous times

Avoid driving:

- At night, [especially after a long shift]
- After drinking alcohol
- After taking medicine that makes you drowsy
- In poor weather conditions

Reduce your driving time

- Take a break at regular intervals or after every two hours of driving
- Follow any safe or legal limits set by your employer on maximum driving distances and journey times
- Make sure you comply with drivers' hours and tachograph rules, if you are subject to them

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resist the temptation to carry on if you feel tired</li> <li>• If possible, share the driving with a colleague</li> <li>• If necessary, plan an overnight stop into your work schedule</li> </ul>
<p>Make sure you are well rested</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avoid driving when you would normally be asleep</li> <li>• Make sure you get plenty of sleep before a long drive</li> <li>• Keep meals light during or immediately before you drive. Heavy meals can make you drowsy</li> </ul>
<p>Stop if you feel tired</p>	<p>If you start to feel tired:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Find somewhere safe to stop (not the hard shoulder)</li> <li>• Take two strong caffeine drinks and have a 'catnap' for 15 – 20 minutes</li> <li>• Find somewhere suitable to sleep overnight, if necessary</li> </ul>
<p>Discuss concerns with your manager</p>	<p>If you are concerned about your driving hours, journeys or schedules or if you find yourself driving when too tired, discuss this with your line manager</p>

## Medical Conditions

**YOU ARE LEGALLY REQUIRED TO INFORM THE RELEVANT DRIVER LICENSING AUTHORITIES OF ANY MEDICAL CONDITION THAT MAY AFFECT YOUR ABILITY TO DRIVE SAFELY**

**FURTHER ADVICE ON MEDICAL CONDITIONS AND DRIVING IS AVAILABLE AT [WWW.RSA.IE](http://WWW.RSA.IE)**

Common conditions, such as colds, flu, migraine, stomach upsets, hay fever, etc. can affect your ability to drive safely. For example, the symptoms of a cold (headache, blocked sinuses, sneezing, and tiredness) if severe enough can impair your concentration, reactions and judgment.

Drivers can be tempted to 'soldier' on, when it would be safer, not to drive until they are feeling better.

If you start to feel ill while driving, stop the vehicle somewhere safe. If the condition is not serious, you may feel well enough to continue after a short break, a warm drink or taking some medication.

But if you find your concentration is affected, then you should make other arrangements to continue your journey.



If you think that you are unfit to drive for any reason, do not drive. Contact your line manager to explain and allow alternative arrangements to be made.



## Eyesight

You should have your eyes tested regularly. Have them examined at least every 2 years or as advised by an optometrist or a qualified dispensing optician. If you do have to wear glasses for driving, make sure to always wear them when driving and keep the lenses clean and scratch free. Carry a spare pair in your car.

Carry a pair of sunglasses in your vehicle [even in the winter] in case they are needed.

## Alcohol and Drugs

The consumption of alcohol or drugs (including prescription drugs) impairs judgment, makes drivers over-confident, and makes drivers likely to take risks. It slows reactions, increases stopping distances, affects judgment of speed and distance, and reduces the field of vision. Even a small amount of alcohol, well below the legal limit, can seriously affect your ability to drive safely.

Drink and drug drivers kill and injure many people every year. The legal drink drive limit is 50mg of alcohol per 100ml of blood. For specified drivers there is a lower limit of 20mg per 100 ml of blood. Specified drivers include learner or novice drivers, commercial and professional drivers.

**YOU ARE LEGALLY OBLIGED TO CARRY YOUR DRIVING LICENCE WITH YOU WHEN YOU DRIVE A VEHICLE**

**IF YOU CANNOT PRODUCE IT FOR INSPECTION TO A GARDA, YOU WILL BE TESTED AT THE LOWER BLOOD ALCOHOL LIMIT OF 20 MG PER 100 ML OF BLOOD**

Drivers who have consumed alcohol may focus more on tasks such as gear changes and take too long to make vital decisions and may miss hazards such as pedestrians on the roads.

It is almost impossible to be sure how many units you have consumed because the alcoholic strength of drinks varies enormously, as does the size of measures.

It is difficult to know the alcoholic strength of a drink without seeing the bottle. Drinks poured at home are usually larger than ones bought in a pub or restaurant. The only safe option is to avoid drinking alcohol in the hours before you will be driving (for example, at lunchtime). Never rely on trying to calculate accurately how much alcohol is in your body, and whether you are above or below the drink drive limit.

**IT IS AN OFFENCE TO DRIVE OVER THE PRESCRIBED LEGAL LIMITS FOR ALCOHOL AND DRUGS**

**THE BEST ADVICE IS NEVER EVER DRINK AND DRIVE**

## **THE MORNING AFTER**

The 'morning after' is a dangerous time for impaired driving. It takes 1 hour for your body to process 1 unit of alcohol. So, for example, it could take 10 hours or more hours for your body to process the alcohol and become alcohol free.

Many drink drivers are caught the morning after they have been drinking. It takes several hours for alcohol to disappear from the body, so if you were drinking late the previous night, you could easily still be over the limit on your way to work the next morning. Even if under the legal limit, you may still be affected by the alcohol in your body.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION ON ALCOHOL AND DRIVING,  
SEE [WWW.RSA.IE](http://WWW.RSA.IE)**

## Medicines and driving

Check with your doctor or pharmacist whether any over-the-counter or prescribed medicines you are taking are likely to affect your driving (for example, by causing drowsiness). If so, ask for an alternative that does not affect driving, or avoid driving altogether.

**CHECK POTENTIAL SIDE EFFECTS OF MEDICATIONS THAT MAY AFFECT YOUR DRIVING WITH YOUR DOCTOR OR PHARMACIST**

Always check the label on medicines and the patient information leaflet for any warnings.

*There are many common drugs that have side effects that may impair your driving ability such as:*

- ▲ Sleeping tablets
- ▲ Anti-depressants
- ▲ Sedatives, tranquillisers or other medicines for anxiety
- ▲ Some pain killers
- ▲ Some allergy or hay-fever medicines
- ▲ Many cough and cold remedies
- ▲ Some medicines for epilepsy
- ▲ Some medicines for diabetes
- ▲ Some medicines for blood pressure or heart conditions
- ▲ Some herbal remedies or supplements

Some medicines can make you feel fatigued.

You may have impaired cognitive functioning or they may affect your confidence and emotional state.



## Illicit drugs

Illicit drugs such as cannabis, cocaine and ecstasy affect drivers in different ways such as slower reaction times, aggressive behaviour, poor concentration, panic attacks and paranoia. As the effects of these drugs wear off, drivers may feel extremely fatigued.

**FURTHER INFORMATION ON DRIVING UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF DRUGS IS AVAILABLE FROM THE RSA AT [WWW.RSA.IE](http://WWW.RSA.IE)**

## Daily Stress Events

Stressors are generated by day-to-day events, e.g. work related issues, relationship difficulties, financial matters and family matters. It is important to manage these stress events in order to minimise their impact on your driving. Contact your line manager to discuss any stress events that could have a negative impact on your driving.

## Personal safety

A well-maintained and regularly-serviced vehicle is less likely to break down and leave you stranded.

Join a reliable breakdown organisation. Your employer may have done this for you.

Take a mobile phone with you for emergencies. Make sure the phone is fully charged before your journey.

In general do not pick up hitchhikers or offer lifts to people you do not know.

Keep valuables and bags out of sight and out of reach.

Keep the car doors locked while driving in slow moving or stationary traffic if you feel vulnerable.

Always lock the door when you are away from the vehicle – even when paying for fuel.

### Safe Parking

The golden rule is to make sure that others can see you and that you do not park in an isolated place.

Always consider the position of the vehicle on the other side of your intended space. Think about pulling in your wing mirrors, but remember to pull them out again before driving off.

Put all valuable items out of sight, e.g. in the boot before leaving your vehicle.

Lock all doors, windows and the sunroof.

Listen and look around before getting out of your vehicle.

Note the location of the street. where you park.

Think about the time you will be returning to your vehicle – a safe place during the day may be very different at night.

Under no circumstances should headlights be left on when the vehicle is parked. If needed consider using side or parking lights.

Choose a car park or parking space that is close to your final destination.



*If possible, choose a location that:*

- ✓ Is visible to other people
- ✓ Is in an open area, so that you have a good all-round view
- ✓ Is well-lit
- ✓ Is not close to bushes or dark corners
- ✓ Allows you to reverse into your chosen space, so you can drive out more safely
- ✓ Allows you to park next to a fixed object (where possible or practical) to minimise the risk of damage to your vehicle

*If using a car park:*

- ✓ Note what time the car park closes
- ✓ Note the level you parked on [write it on your ticket]
- ✓ Lock your doors and close the windows as you enter the car park
- ✓ In multi-storey car parks choose a space that is:
  - ✓ Near the manned kiosk, if there is one
  - ✓ Close to the exit level required

*When returning to the vehicle:*

- ✓ If you are alone, try to follow a group
- ✓ Approach the vehicle with your keys in your hand so you can get in quickly if necessary
- ✓ Check the vehicle as you approach. If there are any signs of it having been tampered with, do not get in – call the Gardai
- ✓ If you have one, keep a personal attack alarm to hand – it's no good at the bottom of a bag!

### **Dealing with Potentially Aggressive Behaviour**

Avoid getting into conflict with another driver. Responding to another driver's aggression or challenge could put you at risk of injury or worse.

If you accidentally cause another driver to become angry – hold up your whole hand as a friendly acknowledgement of your mistake – this can diffuse the situation.

Do not overreact to, or panic about, another driver's error, bad driving or poor attitude. They may be unaware of their actions. Stay away from them and concentrate on your own driving, safely and responsibly.

If your mood is affected by an incident during your journey, once you have moved away from any danger, find an opportunity to stop and take time out.

Never put yourself or your passengers in danger by getting out of the car to deal with an angry or aggressive driver. If confronted with potentially violent situation, remain in the car with the windows closed and door locked. Stay calm and think logically. If necessary, call for help on a mobile phone (not while driving).

Do not make gestures, flash headlights or sound the horn. This may make the situation worse. It will also distract you.

Do not make eye contact with an angry or aggressive driver as this has the potential to make the situation worse.

If you find you are being followed by an impatient driver (tailgated) – do not allow yourself to be “pushed” along, intimidated or made to increase your speed. Without actually pulling over or stopping – find a safe opportunity to allow that driver to pass.

Do not allow an aggressive driver to follow you home.

**IF YOU THINK THAT YOU ARE BEING FOLLOWED BY AN AGGRESSIVE DRIVER, MAKE YOUR WAY TO A PUBLIC PLACE, GARDA STATION OR BUSY STREET AND IF NECESSARY CALL THE GARDAI (999 OR 112)**

# Safe Vehicle

## Who is responsible for the vehicle?

If your employer provides the vehicle, they must make sure that it is properly registered, taxed, DOE or NCT tested as well as insured. They are required to have vehicles serviced according to the manufacturer's recommendations.

Your employer will need to advise you when services and roadworthiness inspections are due and make necessary arrangements. Regular servicing helps to avoid faults and unexpected breakdowns. Your employer should advise clearly on your responsibilities in respect of company provided vehicles.

There should be a clear rule that any vehicle that is, or suspected to be, in an unsafe or illegal condition will not be used until all necessary repairs have been completed.

**AS A DRIVER, YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR ENSURING THAT THE VEHICLE YOU ARE DRIVING IS SAFE TO USE ON THE ROAD AND MEETS ALL LEGAL REQUIREMENTS. THIS IS REGARDLESS OF OWNERSHIP**

## Using your own vehicle

If you are using your own vehicle for work purposes, then you are responsible for its roadworthiness, motor tax, insurance and condition.

Your employer has a legal duty to verify that your vehicle is safe and legal when it is being used for work.

It is essential that if you use your own vehicle for work (excluding commuting), your motor insurance policy includes



cover for business use. Make sure you inform your insurers that you use the vehicle for work, and how you do so. Some employers set rules (e.g. age limits, safety features) for the type of vehicle that can be used for work purposes.

*Your employer may have rules requiring you to:*

- ✓ Show documentary evidence that your vehicle has valid motor tax and valid roadworthiness certificate
- ✓ Show documentary evidence, that you are insured to drive your vehicle for business use
- ✓ Show evidence that your vehicle is serviced according to the manufacturer's recommendations. Agree to conduct regular vehicle safety checks
- ✓ Not carry loads for which the vehicle is unsuited (a car is not a van)
- ✓ Not carry hazardous materials
- ✓ Only carry the number of passengers for whom there are seat belts
- ✓ Not use the vehicle in conditions for which it is not designed (e.g. off-road)

**SOME EMPLOYERS MAKE CHECKS ON DRIVERS OF PRIVATE CARS ANNUALLY (OR MORE FREQUENTLY)**

**SOME EMPLOYERS MAY, IN ADDITION DO RANDOM SPOT CHECKS**

**AS AN EMPLOYEE, YOU MUST CO-OPERATE WITH YOUR EMPLOYER'S HEALTH AND SAFETY PROCEDURES AND FOLLOW THEIR RULES AND POLICIES RELATING TO YOUR OWN VEHICLE, WHEN IT IS USED FOR WORK**

### **Pre-drive vehicle checks**

As a driver you must consider whether the vehicle is suitable for the work task, for example:

- ▲ If carrying passengers, is there a seat belt for each occupant?
- ▲ If carrying children, are there appropriate child seats and child restraints for each child that needs one?
- ▲ If carrying a heavy load or an animal, can you secure it safely?

If you find any problem during the check, report it to your manager immediately.

**THE MOST COMMON CAUSE OF VEHICLE BREAKDOWN IS VEHICLE NEGLIGENCE**

**DAILY PRE DRIVE CHECKS ARE A SIMPLE AND EFFECTIVE WAY TO SPOT POTENTIALLY DANGEROUS ISSUES BEFORE THE VEHICLE IS USED**

**PRE-DRIVE PREVENTATIVE CHECKS ARE SIMPLE AND LESS TIME-CONSUMING THAN THE BREAKDOWN THAT MAY FOLLOW IF YOU DO NOT DO THEM**

You need to check both the exterior and interior of the vehicle before driving. Check the following:

- ✓ **Tyres.** Undamaged (no cuts or bulges), are at the correct pressure and have enough tread depth all round. The legal minimum is 1.6mm, but above 3mm gives much shorter braking distances in the wet
- ✓ **Vehicle body.** No signs of damage or loose vehicle body panels and that the boot and bonnet are closed properly
- ✓ **Fluid levels.** Oil, coolant and windscreen wash levels are correct (check when cold)
- ✓ **Fuel.** Know the correct type of fuel for the vehicle [especially for hire or loan cars]. Make sure the fuel cap closed and secure

- ✓ **Brakes.** Working correctly. Make sure the parking brake is on properly when parked and before exiting the vehicle at any time
- ✓ **Lights and indicators.** Clean, not damaged and working correctly. Carry spare bulbs in your vehicle
- ✓ **Windscreen and windows.** Clean and not damaged. No items attached that may restrict driver's view. Use of screen wash in winter stops your water freezing. In summer this helps to remove insects from windscreen
- ✓ **Washers and wipers.** Working correctly. It is recommended to change wipers regularly. The rubber deteriorates over time when exposed to the elements. An occasional wipe with methylated spirits will prevent streaking
- ✓ **Mirrors.** Clean, correctly positioned for your maximum safe vision and not damaged. No items attached that may restrict driver's view
- ✓ **Documentation.** All the legally required documentation is displayed on the windscreen (i.e. Motor tax, Roadworthiness, Insurance discs)
- ✓ **Dashboard.** Look at the dashboard when you start the car and check which lights illuminate. If you are not familiar with the vehicle, check the handbook to ensure you know what the different lights mean
- ✓ **Doors.** Make sure that all of the vehicles doors are closed properly
- ✓ **Seat position.** Adjust driver's seat to suit you. You should be able to see and reach all of the controls comfortably. Good all-round, unobstructed, visibility is vital. Check that your view is not obstructed by objects such as stickers or electronic devices

- ✓ **Head restraints.** Adjust your head restraint correctly, and check that every passenger has their head restraint correctly adjusted. The top of the head restraint should be level with the top of your head and it should be as close to the back of your head as possible. This will help to protect against whiplash, and prevent long-term injuries. Make sure your head is not resting against the head restraint as it can encourage drowsiness
- ✓ **Handbrake or Parking brake.** Make sure brake is applied when you stop or park the vehicle
- ✓ **Gears.** Make sure the gears are in neutral or parked for automatic vehicles
- ✓ **Safety Belt.** Do up your safety belt and check passengers are wearing theirs and that any children are properly restrained
- ✓ **Sat-Nav.** Make sure that sat-nav is not placed where it might be hit and flung forward by an airbag

**IF IN ANY DOUBT HOW TO DO THESE CHECKS, READ THE VEHICLE'S HANDBOOK, AND/OR ASK SOMEONE TO SHOW YOU. ASK YOUR MANAGER IF THE ORGANISATION PROVIDES A PRE-DRIVE CHECKLIST**

**REFER TO THE DRIVER WALK AROUND CHECKS POSTERS, CHECKLISTS, INFORMATION SHEETS AND VIDEOS THAT CAN BE ACCESSED AT [WWW.GARDA.IE](http://WWW.GARDA.IE), [WWW.HSA.IE](http://WWW.HSA.IE) AND [WWW.RSA.IE](http://WWW.RSA.IE)**

### Vehicle cleanliness

Windscreens/rear windows should be free from clutter to aid efficient demisting of windscreen and optimal view of the road.

Dashboard and cab area should be kept clean and free of loose items.

If eating in the vehicle, leftovers, wrappers and containers should be disposed of immediately in a suitable manner. **NEVER EAT AND DRIVE AT THE SAME TIME.**

Ensure items that could become lodged under drivers pedals are safely stowed and cannot fall onto the floor of the driver's cab.  
E.g. bottles and cans.

## Tyres

The life of tyres depends on how the vehicle is driven. Avoid hitting tyres against kerbs, especially when parking as this may weaken the tyre and may damage your wheel or wheel tracking.

Excessive speed, braking or acceleration will cause tyres to wear faster. If tyres are not maintained at the manufacturer's recommended pressures, they will wear more quickly. You should regularly check your tyres and if in any doubt, get them checked by an authorised tyre dealer.

Check your spare tyre from time to time. Emergency wheels have a maximum speed and may have a limit on the distance that can be travelled. If the vehicle does not have a spare wheel, make yourself familiar with the use of alternative equipment provided. E.g. air compressor or temporary sealant.

If the vehicle is fitted with run flat tyres, make sure that you know the limitations on use, such as maximum speed and distance that can be travelled in the event of a puncture or loss of pressure.



## Safety Equipment

It is recommended good practice that you carry the following items of safety equipment for use in emergencies or breakdowns. You need to be prepared to deal with situations that happen in daylight as well as in poor visibility or at night.

The following items should be kept in a place that is easy and quick to access in an emergency:

- ✓ Warning triangle
- ✓ First aid kit [for driver]
- ✓ Torch
- ✓ High visibility jacket(s). Keep one for each occupant in the vehicle cab at all times

## Seating position and safety

There is an increasing trend in the numbers of drivers suffering from back, neck or shoulder problems. These problems can be made worse by bad driver position in the vehicle, poor posture and long time spent in a sitting position behind the wheel. To reduce the risk of such problems occurring and to provide you with improved neck, and spine protection, the following should be adopted:

- ▲ The lower chest should come forward and up in order to relax the shoulder blades, back and downwards
- ▲ Shoulder blades should be in good contact with the back of the seat. The lower spine should not push into the back support
- ▲ As a guide, Hands should generally be in the 'ten to two' or 'quarter to three' position on the steering wheel [depending on which is most comfortable]
- ▲ The steering wheel should be directly in front of the driver and the driver should be able to rest their wrist on the top of the steering wheel without stretching

- ▲ The driver should be able to reach the pedals and controls with undue effort

### Seat belts

Seat belts must be worn by all passengers and the driver when a vehicle is being driven. You should adjust the seatbelt to suit you before driving.

The driver is responsible to make sure that all passengers, including rear seat passengers, wear a seat belt on every journey, no matter how short. This applies in vans, as well as cars, and in larger vehicles if they have seat belts fitted.

### Child restraints

For those whose driving for work duties involve carrying children under 17 years as passengers, particular attention should be paid to making sure that children are properly and securely restrained in the vehicle to prevent unnecessary injury. Your employer should provide the necessary information and training to allow you make sure that child passengers are carried safely in the vehicle that you drive.

Seat belts are designed for adults. In a crash, a child may slip out of their seat belt because it is too big, and an ill-fitting belt could even cause injuries. So, children need to use appropriate child restraint for their weight, height and age.



**IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY, AS THE DRIVER, TO ENSURE THAT PASSENGERS INCLUDING CHILDREN UNDER 17 YEARS USE THE CORRECT RESTRAINT OR A SEAT BELT**

If you are carrying children ask your employer about child seats and about training so you know how to check that the right ones are being used and you are able to fit them correctly. The safest place for children to travel properly secured, is in the rear of any vehicle.

In a crash at just 50 Km/h, an unrestrained person is thrown forward with a force 30 to 60 times their body weight. They are thrown about inside the vehicle, injuring themselves and quite possibly seriously injuring (or killing) other occupants. They could also be ejected from the car through one of the windows causing serious injury or death.

It is not safe or legal to hold a child on your lap. It is also dangerous to put a seat belt around yourself and a child [or around 2 children]. The safest way for children to travel in vehicles is in a child seat that is suitable for their weight and height.

Seat belt offences attract penalty points and could result in disqualification from driving.

**SEAT BELTS SAVE THOUSANDS OF LIVES EVERY YEAR. IT IS ESTIMATED THAT 20% MORE LIVES A YEAR COULD BE SAVED IF EVERY OCCUPANT ALWAYS WORE THEIR SEAT BELT**

**FOR INFORMATION ON SEAT BELTS AND CHILD RESTRAINTS GO TO [WWW.RSA.IE](http://WWW.RSA.IE)**



## Securing Loads

It is illegal and dangerous to drive a vehicle that is overloaded or has a load that is not secured. As the driver, you are responsible for ensuring that any load you carry is legal and safe, even if it was loaded by another person.

Your employer is responsible for providing and developing clear procedures and safe systems of work to help you to make sure that loads are secured properly and safe for any vehicle that you use for work.

If you are not sure how your vehicle should be loaded, talk to your manager who should be able to clarify for you.

## General considerations

- ✓ Do not exceed your vehicle's Maximum authorised mass (M.A.M). This is the maximum permissible weight the vehicle is permitted to carry based on the capability of tyres, suspension, etc. It includes everything in (including its passengers), and on, your vehicle
- ✓ Drive more cautiously as handling and performance will be affected by the load and stopping distances will be increased
- ✓ Make sure all items are secure. Items sliding around or tipping over whenever you brake/turn will be both irritating and very distracting
- ✓ Keep the dash and front floor space clear. Items that fall off and roll around could get lodged under the brake pedal
- ✓ Keep larger or heavier items low down in the vehicle
  - ✓ Put the bigger items in first and then pack the smaller items around the larger items as this will help keep your centre of gravity lower to minimise the effect on handling

- ✓ Heavy items should be packed tightly and properly secured to the vehicle body to reduce the risk of them bursting through in a crash. This makes for better weight distribution and vehicle handling
- ✓ Can you still see?
  - ✓ Avoid packing items above the back seat line so that you see clearly out of the back window
  - ✓ Consider using a roof rack or roof box for lighter or bulkier stuff to leave more room inside
- ✓ Passengers come first
  - ✓ If you have to fold seats to get a large or awkward load in the vehicle, come back for your passengers later on. This is especially important if the load prevents them from putting their seat belt on

### Roof Rack/Roof Boxes

Roof racks are a great way of carrying very large or awkward items but take care:

If you use a roof rack or roof box, you should:

- ✓ Check that the roof rack or roof box is suitable for the load being carried
- ✓ Make sure that it is correctly and securely fitted
- ✓ Check your vehicle manual to make sure that the load, including the weight of the roof rack/roof box itself, doesn't exceed the maximum permissible weight of the vehicle
- ✓ Make sure that your load is securely attached and that it doesn't stick out creating a danger to other road users. Especially pedestrians and cyclists!
- ✓ Make sure there is a secure fixing, holding the front of a long load down [e.g. ladders]

- ✓ Make sure all fixings and restraints to the rear are well secured to prevent loads sliding forward under heavy braking
- ✓ Stop, check and re-secure your load regularly. Fixings and restraints will work loose during a journey
- ✓ Make sure to think about the extra height when approaching bridges and other overhead structures
- ✓ Distribute weight safely. If you can, try to put bulky but lighter items on the roof and heavier items in the vehicle. This will help keep the centre of gravity down and improve stability
- ✓ Think about how, and where, you can safely load and unload things in a roof rack
- ✓ Think about how the extra weight affects the vehicle's handling and stopping distances
- ✓ Check whether tyre pressures should be adjusted when carrying a full load

### Towing and Trailers

Only use a trailer if you have the correct licence to do so, and you have been trained to drive with one. Make sure you know how to connect the trailer, including the electrical connections. Ensure that it is not overloaded and that the weight is evenly distributed and securely covered. Make sure no items are sticking out. Cars towing trailers are subject to lower speed limits and should not generally use the overtaking lane on dual carriageways and motorways.

**EXCEPT FOR HGV'S TRAVELLING ON MOTORWAYS,  
THE MAXIMUM ALLOWED SPEED FOR A VEHICLE  
TOWING A TRAILER IS 80 KM/H**

Checks before towing	Actions when towing
Make sure you have the correct licence for the trailer being towed	Where possible, drive out forward from parking position
The tow bar or towing device is strong enough and attached securely	Drive at a speed appropriate to the prevailing road and weather conditions
The safety breakaway cable is secured in place	Take extra care when accelerating and braking and especially when approaching corners and roundabouts
The load in the trailer is spread evenly across the axles	Leave more distance than usual between you and the vehicle in front
The wheels, tyres, wheel bearings, steering suspension and brakes are in good working order	Allow plenty of extra time and space if entering traffic
All lights and reflectors on both the vehicle and the trailer are clean and in good working order	Allow extra time and distance for overtaking other road users
There is clear unobstructed view for all windows and mirrors	Take extra care when driving in high winds
Carry a spare wheel for your trailer	If following traffic is building behind you, as a courtesy, and when safe to do so pull over to allow vehicles behind you to overtake
Maintain your trailer in good roadworthy condition	

## Vehicle security

There are many simple steps that you as a driver can take to safeguard your vehicle.

When parked remove the ignition key, engage the steering lock and apply the parking break before getting out of your vehicle.

To prevent your vehicle being stolen or broken into:

- ✓ Never leave your vehicle unattended when you are warming it up in winter or cooling it down in summer
- ✓ Lock the vehicle. Even if only leaving it for a couple of minutes. E.g. when paying for fuel
- ✓ Close all windows fully
- ✓ Never leave work documents or equipment or personal items on view inside the vehicle
- ✓ Use attended or secure vehicle parking areas
- ✓ Always park in well-lit areas



## Key security

Always keep keys safe when not using your vehicle. That means:

- ✓ Out of sight
- ✓ In a secure place
- ✓ Out of reach of children
- ✓ Away from windows and doors
- ✓ Not leaving them on a desk in an open office area, especially where there is public access
- ✓ Never displaying the registration number on the key ring

Always take and keep your keys with you when you leave the driver's seat. E.g. loading items into rear of vehicle

## Electric Vehicles

Electric vehicles are in many ways similar to petrol or diesel vehicles. However they are so quiet that you can barely hear the motor run, even at top speed. This may be a danger to pedestrians, particularly pedestrians crossing the street or in parking areas as they cannot hear the car coming. If you drive an electric vehicle you must be constantly aware of this issue while driving in populated areas.

Drivers also need to be aware that electric vehicles have very powerful motors to power them. When moving from a stationary position you need to be very careful because the vehicle accelerates faster and has more torque than a petrol or diesel powered vehicle.

# Safe Journey

## Driver considerations

You should make sure that you are fit to drive. Do not drive if you feel fatigued, unwell or are under the influence of alcohol or drugs. You should be well rested before you start out on a long journey.

Almost all road crashes involve human error, ranging from simple, 'honest' mistakes to deliberate dangerous and illegal behaviour. Every year many people are killed in crashes in which someone was 'careless, reckless or in a hurry.'

Speed is the single biggest contributory factor in vehicle collisions.

Collisions often occur when the driver "looked but didn't see". Never be distracted, always concentrate on your driving

**IT IS ESTIMATED THAT IN UP TO 40% OF ROAD DEATHS,  
ALCOHOL WAS A FACTOR**

**20% OF FATAL ROAD CRASHES ARE ESTIMATED TO  
BE CAUSED BY FATIGUE**



Driving is a very personal thing; our attitude as drivers, how we deal with our own mistakes and our reaction to those made by other people, will influence our own safety and wellbeing and that of other road users around us.

Aggressive, selfish or impatient attitudes when we drive can develop into a tendency to take irresponsible risks, such as:

- ▲ Tailgating [driving too close to the vehicle in front]
- ▲ Exceeding speed limits
- ▲ Undertaking
- ▲ Jumping red lights

Driver emotional mood can influence behaviour. Drivers commonly express how they feel in the way they drive. Traffic delays and congestion can influence our frame of mind. Life stresses, such as relationship anxieties, financial or employment problems, domestic or workplace arguments, influence our mood and can affect our driving.

**BEFORE DRIVING FOR WORK YOU MUST FOCUS ON THE TASK, PREPARE FOR THE JOURNEY AND ALWAYS GIVE IT YOUR FULL ATTENTION**

### **Give yourself time**

Plan your journey to allow time to complete it (including rest breaks and foreseeable weather and traffic conditions) at safe speeds and without needing to exceed speed limits.

Your journey time is determined much more by your average speed during the whole journey than your maximum speed for part of it. This is especially the case in urban areas, where you constantly have to slow down for junctions, traffic lights and other road users. Knowing that you have plenty of time to complete your journey will help you to relax and avoid the temptation to push your speed.

There are three key areas to be considered before starting out on a journey, to make sure that all potential dangers are assessed.



## Pre Journey Checks

Driver	Vehicle	Journey
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Make sure that you have a current valid driving licence for the vehicle that you intend to drive</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Make sure that vehicle pre-use check is completed and any defects dealt with or reported</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Plan your journey and allow enough time to complete it safely</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Do not drive if you feel fatigued, unwell or if you are under the influence of drugs or alcohol</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ The vehicle is roadworthy</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Try to be in a calm, good mood before driving</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ The vehicle has correct and valid insurance, motor tax and roadworthiness certificates and that they are in place</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Plan for the safest route</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Plan time into journeys in case you are delayed by traffic. This can help to relieve the pressure you feel when running late</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Avoid urban and residential areas if possible</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Be tolerant towards others. Shouting at another driver after their poor driving will not change anything, but anger will affect your judgment for some time after</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Try to use dual-carriageways and motorways where possible</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Accept that drivers (including you!) make honest mistakes and have lapses in concentration</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Check travel and weather information before travel and during the course of your journey</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Plan when and where you will take breaks. Rule of thumb is a 15 minute break for every two hours driven</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Always drive in a safe and legal manner</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Be courteous and thank others for their courtesies</li> </ul>

## Safe speed

**EXCESSIVE OR INAPPROPRIATE SPEED IS THE CAUSE OF ¼ OF ALL ROAD COLLISIONS IN IRELAND**

**SPEEDING IS THE MOST COMMON MOTORING OFFENCE IN IRELAND**

Always drive within the legal speed limit for the type of vehicle you are driving. A good rule of thumb is to leave enough space when you are stopped in traffic so that you can see the road under the rear tyres of the vehicle in front.

The **2 Second Rule** is a useful way to help you keep a safe distance from the car in front when the vehicle is moving.

### THE 2 SECOND RULE

When the vehicle in front passes a stationary object, road marker or sign, you slowly say ***“Only a fool breaks the 2 second rule”***



If your vehicle passes that same marker or sign before you have finished saying this [it takes approximately 2 seconds to say] then you are too close to the vehicle in front.


In cases of poor weather conditions such as rain you should leave 4 seconds. Or say the 2 second rule twice.

Snow or icy conditions require up to ten times the normal braking distance.

When travelling at higher speeds, you have less time to identify and react to what is happening around you. It takes longer to stop. And if there is a crash, it is more severe, causing greater injury to you, your passengers and any pedestrian or rider hit. Higher speeds can also magnify other errors, such as close-following (tailgating) or fatigue or distraction, thus multiplying

the chances of causing a crash. Drivers who 'speed' crash more often than those who do not.

### Speed limits

<b>COLLISION SPEED [SIDE COLLISIONS]</b>		<b>RISK OF DRIVER DEATH</b>
30 km/h		0%
50 km/h		30%
55 km/h		80%
<b>&gt;65 km/h</b>		<b>90%</b>

Always stay within speed limits (including variable limits and temporary limits at roadworks) even if you think the limit is too low. Speed limits set the maximum speed for that road. But there are many circumstances when it is not safe to drive at that speed (for example, around schools at opening and closing times, on busy, narrow roads, and on rural roads which are bendy and hilly and where visibility is restricted). Always drive mindful of all of the prevailing conditions.

Make sure you know the speed limit of the roads you are using. Far too many drivers caught speeding complain that they thought the road had a higher speed limit (e.g. 60 km/h instead of 50 km/h). In many cases, the nature of the road does not indicate the speed limit. In urban areas, for example, dual carriageways can have limits of 30 km/h, 60 km/h, 80 km/h, or 100 km/h.


**WHEN DRIVING ON STREET-LIT ROADS, ASSUME THE LIMIT IS 50 KM/H UNTIL YOU SEE A SIGN SAYING OTHERWISE**

**BUT, REMEMBER THE LIMIT COULD BE LOWER – 30 KM/H AND SOMETIMES EVEN LESS**

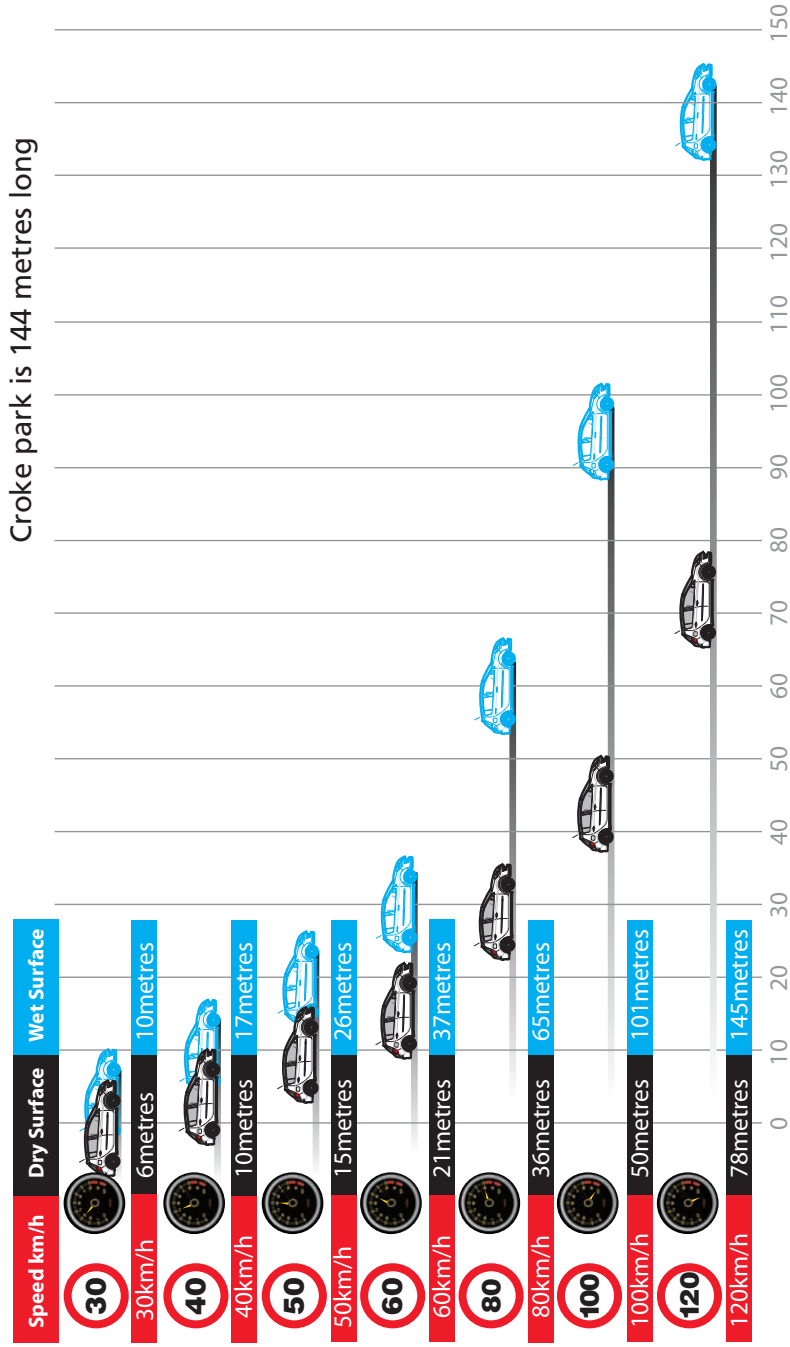
Speed limit signs tend to be placed at junctions because this is often the point at which the limit changes. However, junctions are also where you need to absorb a wide range of information and it is easy to miss a speed limit sign when concentrating on one or more other things (e.g. which way am I going? Is that driver going to pull out?). So get into the habit of checking for speed limit signs at junctions and looking for repeater signs after the junction, especially if the nature of the road has changed. If you are not sure assume the limit is lower until you see a sign.

Also, make sure that you know any special speed limit for the vehicle you are driving. E.g. if towing a trailer.

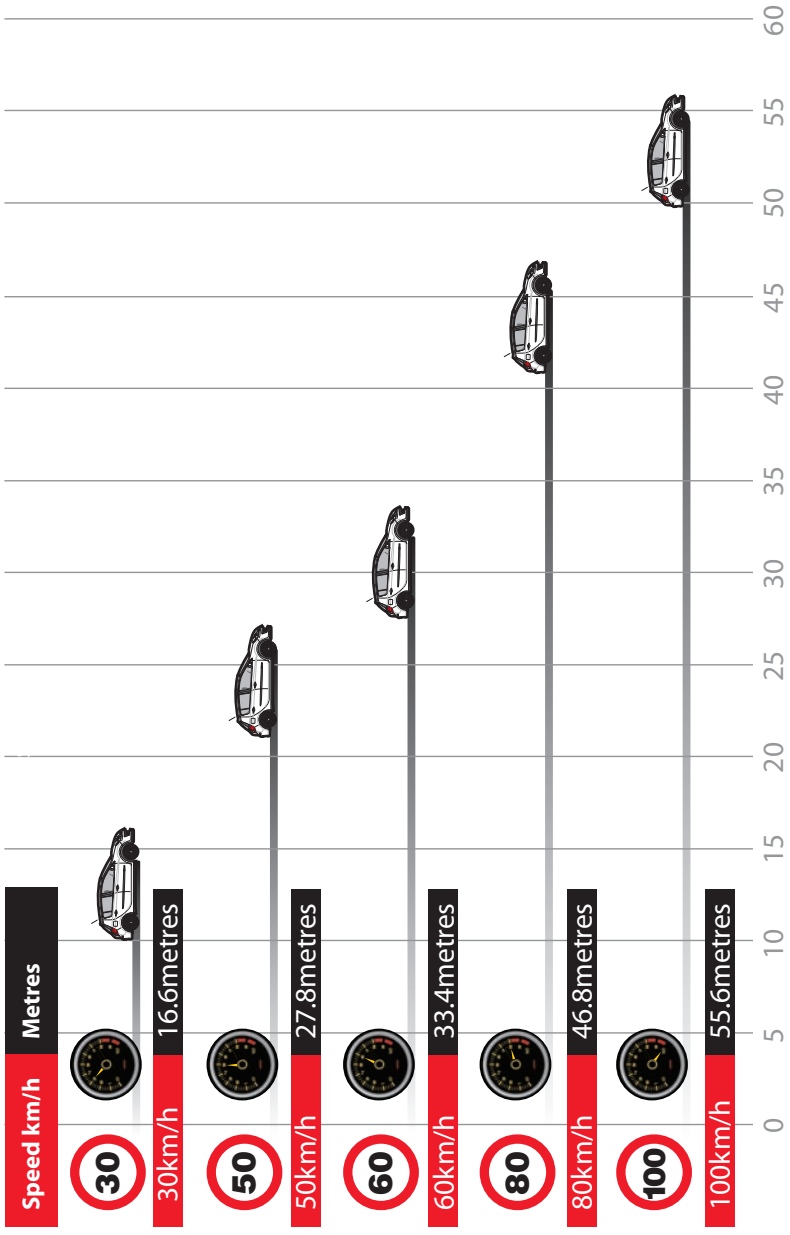
Many car drivers unintentionally exceed the speed limit, often without realising it. Modern vehicles are so powerful and comfortable they give drivers little sensation of their speed. It is too easy to creep above the limit, and in particular, many drivers believe it is difficult to drive a modern vehicle at no more than the posted speed on a 50 km/h road; this is not so it only requires concentration and restraint.

DRIVING SPEED		RISK OF SERIOUS COLLISION
60 km/h		2%
70 km/h		5%
80 km/h		20%
<b>85 km/h</b>		<b>50%</b>
<b>&gt;90 km/h</b>		<b>70%</b>

## BRAKING DISTANCES



### DISTANCE TRAVELLED IN 2 SECONDS



Drivers are responsible for the speeds at which they choose to drive, but there are some simple and practical things drivers who find it difficult to stay within speed limits can do to help themselves:

### **Top tips to help you drive at the right speed**

- ✓ Check your speedometer regularly, especially when leaving high speed roads
- ✓ Know the limits – look for signs, especially at junctions
- ✓ Remember, speed limits are a maximum, not a target
- ✓ Try to stay in lower gear in a 50 km/h speed limit area
- ✓ Lower your speed when kids are about
- ✓ Concentrate on your driving
- ✓ Slow down when entering villages, towns and residential areas. Drive as though a child could step out in front of you at any time
- ✓ When in car parks drive very slowly. Small children cannot see over parked cars. Drivers may not see them either
- ✓ Give yourself plenty of time

**BEING LATE FOR A MEETING OR APPOINTMENT WILL NOT KILL YOU**

**SPEEDING TO GET THERE MIGHT KILL YOU, A PEDESTRIAN  
OR OTHER ROAD USER**



## Impact of your speed on pedestrians

IMPACT SPEED		RISK OF PEDESTRIAN DEATH
30 km/h		5%
50 km/h		45%
60 km/h		85%

Risk of death to pedestrians varies enormously depending on the impact speed.

At 60km/h, there is an 85% chance of death.

At 50km/h, this is reduced to 45% chance of death.

At 30 km/h the chance of death is only 5%.

### Distractions

Driving requires your full concentration all of the time. Trying to do something else while driving will distract you, slow your reactions and make a crash more likely.

### Mobile phones

Using a hand-held or hands-free mobile phone while driving is a significant distraction, and greatly increases the risk of collision. It is illegal to hold or cradle a hand-held mobile phone while driving (this includes any activity that involves dialing a number, writing a text or accessing internet or other applications).

**YOU DO NOT HAVE TO BE TALKING ON THE PHONE FOR IT TO BE A MAJOR SOURCE OF DISTRACTION**

It can also be illegal to use a hands-free phone while driving. Depending upon the circumstances, drivers could be charged



with driving without reasonable consideration, careless or even dangerous driving if an incident occurs whilst they are distracted because they are using a hands-free phone.

**IT IS ILLEGAL TO HOLD OR USE A HAND HELD MOBILE PHONE WHILE DRIVING**

Using a hands-free phone while driving does not significantly reduce the risks because the problems are caused mainly by the mental distraction and divided attention of taking part in a phone conversation at the same time as driving.



The best advice is to switch the phone off whilst driving. If you must deal with that call, find a safe place to pull over and do so. If you are on a motorway, take the next exit off the motorway to deal with your call. Never use the hard shoulder; it is illegal to do so. For long journeys consider leaving a voice greeting stating that you are currently driving and will attend to your messages when you have reached your destination.

## The help minimise your risk of distraction



**KEEP YOUR EYES ON THE ROAD**

**KEEP YOUR HANDS ON THE WHEEL**

**KEEP YOUR MIND ON WHAT YOU ARE DOING. DRIVING**

### **In-vehicle navigation systems**

An increasing number of vehicles are being fitted with various devices designed to help the driver, with navigation aids. Satellite navigation devices [sat-nav] are the most common. While these devices can make driving safer and easier if used properly, they can also increase risk (e.g. by distracting you) if used improperly.

If your employer provides you or your vehicle [irrespective of ownership] with technology (such as sat- nav or data loggers) ask your manager for training in how to use it safely. In particular, you should not adjust or operate devices while actually driving. For example, routes in the sat-nav should be set before the journey starts. If it is necessary to make adjustments or to input new information, only do so when stopped in a safe place. Do not follow the directions when they are contrary to road traffic laws.

### *Sat-Nav Safety tips for drivers:*

- ✓ Position your 'sat nav' safely to avoid the air bags and to prevent interference with the vehicles controls
- ✓ Familiarise yourself with the menu system and set preferences prior to any journey commencing
- ✓ Review the map before starting out to make sure that the system is proposing the correct roads, to the correct destination
- ✓ Concentrate on the road and not the sat nav screen
- ✓ Always obey road signs and take notice of warning signs
- ✓ Make sure that the route taken is suitable for the vehicle being used
- ✓ Never attempt to program a sat nav whilst driving

**NEVER FOLLOW SATELLITE NAVIGATION DIRECTIONS AT THE EXPENSE OF ROAD SAFETY**

**THE ROAD SIGNAGE AND OR LAYOUT MAY HAVE CHANGED AND YOUR SYSTEM MAY NOT BE UP TO DATE. THE ROAD MAY HAVE CHANGED TEMPORARILY OR TEMPORARY SIGNAGE / DIRECTIONS MAY BE IN PLACE**

### **Other distractions**

Eating, drinking, smoking, handling in vehicle equipment [Sat-nav, stereo, data recorders etc.] are all distractions to the main driving task. If a driver is distracted for even a second at a critical time, this may result in the vehicle going out of control.

Many other things that might seem simple and innocent can be distracting when driving. Fatal crashes can and do occur because a driver chose to unwrap a sweet, take a drink or light a cigarette whilst driving.

**SAFE DRIVING NEEDS 100% CONCENTRATION; AVOID UNNECESSARY DISTRACTIONS**

**Safe Driving Practices**

When starting from cold drive away as soon as it is safe. Do not leave your car idling.

Drive smoothly. Read the road ahead so you can keep moving as much as possible, and avoid harsh acceleration and braking. Accelerate gently and decelerate smoothly.

Change gear as soon as possible without labouring the engine (around 2000 rpm in a diesel car or around 2500rpm in a petrol car).

Only use the air conditioning if you really need to.

Turn off electrical equipment, such as heated rear windscreen, demister blowers and headlights, when you do not need them.

Stay within speed limits. Driving at lower speed will improve fuel economy.

**DRIVING AT 120KM/H USES UP TO 9% MORE FUEL THAN 100KM/H AND UP TO 15% MORE THAN 85KM/H**

**CRUISING AT 130KM/H CAN USE UP TO 25% MORE FUEL THAN AT 120KM/H**

**Motorway Driving**

Motorways are the safest type of road, but also the least forgiving. High speed driving means that dangerous situations develop quickly. Vehicles travel much further before drivers even start to react. If you drive too close to the vehicle in front, , forget to use your mirrors or signal before moving out, it could have disastrous consequences for you and other road users.



### Joining a motorway

Unless you join the motorway at its start, you will normally join via a slip road. Use the slip road to adjust your speed to the traffic already on the motorway. Sometimes, you may have to slow down to merge safely.

Signal in good time to make sure other motorway users know you intend to join the motorway traffic. As you approach the motorway on the slip road, check your mirrors and your blind spot for a safe gap in the traffic.

Adjust your speed to merge safely and legally into the traffic in the left-hand lane (lane one). Stay in the slip road if it continues as an extra lane on the motorway. Avoid crossing the solid white line that separates the traffic lanes.

Stay in the left-hand lane (lane one), to allow you to adjust to the speed of other motorway traffic before you consider overtaking.

### On the motorway

Drive at a steady cruising speed in the left-hand lane (lane 1),

keeping a safe distance from the vehicle in front. Stay within the maximum speed limit posted, generally 120km/h, even if other drivers are going faster.

### **LANE DISCIPLINE**

You should know the purpose of each lane on the motorway:

**Lane 1:** Stay in this lane unless you are overtaking.

**Lane 2:** use this lane for overtaking. Always move back to lane 1 when overtaking complete and it is safe to do so. When safe to do so you can also move into lane 2 to allow vehicles entering left from the slip road to enter the motorway at a junction.

**Lane 3:** on a three-lane motorway, lane 3 is the outside lane. Only use this lane if traffic in lanes 1 and 2 is moving in queues and you need to overtake or make room for merging traffic. Move back to lane 1 as soon as it is safe to do so.

**IN GENERAL DO NOT USE THE OUTSIDE LANE IF YOU ARE DRIVING A LARGE GOODS VEHICLE, OR IF YOU ARE TOWING A TRAILER**

### **SAFE OVERTAKING**

Stay in the left-hand lane (lane 1), one unless you need to overtake. Only overtake if you are sure you can move into the centre lane or right-hand lane (as appropriate) without interfering with other traffic.

Only move between two lanes at a time. For example to move from lane 1 to lane 3; first move to lane 2 and wait to move to lane 3 when it is safe to do so.

When moving into lane 2 take care to check for drivers moving from lanes 1 or 3 as appropriate so as to be sure to avoid you both trying to enter the same space in the center lane (lane 2).

## SIGNALING

You must signal before every lane change.

Know the blind spots of your own and other driver's vehicles. Check your mirrors first, and if it is safe (remembering that other vehicles are moving at high speed) give your signal and move out. Observing and scanning ahead of you will help you to avoid unnecessary braking.

When you have overtaken and have allowed plenty of distance for the vehicle you have overtaken (wait until you can see its front bumper in your interior mirror) and when safe signal and move back into the left-hand lane.

Only stop or park on the motorway in the event of an emergency or when you are told to do so by Emergency Services or Gardai.

Never drive on the hard shoulder. It is an offence to do so.

Never reverse or attempt to turn on a motorway. Always drive forward (in the direction of the traffic flow). If you have entered the motorway in error, drive to the next junction to exit safely. It is an offence to drive against the flow of traffic on a motorway.

**IF YOU FIND YOURSELF DRIVING AGAINST THE FLOW OF TRAFFIC,  
PULL IN IMMEDIATELY TO THE HARD SHOULDER AND STOP**

**CONTACT THE GARDAI BY DIALING 112**

**DO NOT ATTEMPT TO TURN YOUR VEHICLE. WAIT FOR HELP**



### Leaving the motorway

You normally leave a motorway by moving onto a slip road and then join a roundabout or a non-motorway road. Read the road signs early and plan your move.

When leaving the motorway, watch out for signs that let you know that you are getting near your exit, usually marked 300 meter, 200 meter and 100 meter to the next exit.

Move into the left hand lane in good time, so you are ready to signal that you are exiting when you reach the 300 meter countdown marker. Make sure you have signaled before you reach the 100 meter countdown marker.

Do not slow down too soon. Maintain your motorway speed if traffic allows until you have exited the motorway onto the slip road.

Then slow down steadily until you have reached an appropriate speed. If two motorways are merging, or a motorway is dividing into separate ones, check the direction signs for the lane you need to be in and get into that lane in good time to avoid last-minute or unexpected manoeuvres.

Once you have left the motorway check your speed. After high speed driving, 60km/h may feel like 30km/h. Remember, you will now be facing oncoming traffic and the usual hazards for conventional roads.

### **Motorway breakdowns**

**ONLY** use the hard shoulder in an emergency.

If your vehicle breaks down or you become so unwell that you cannot drive, continue to a safe stopping point, pull over onto the hard shoulder of the motorway and keep as far left as possible, preferably near an emergency telephone.





Switch on your hazard lights. Do not place any warning triangle onto the Motorway including hard shoulder. This would put you at risk of being struck by a vehicle.

You and any passengers should leave the vehicle by the doors on the opposite side to the traffic lanes. Get behind any safety barrier and well clear of the traffic lanes and hard shoulder. Leave animals in the car. If possible lock all the doors except the front passenger door.

Stand as far away from the running motorway lane as possible. Behind the crash barrier and on an embankment is best.

Call for help on the emergency telephones rather than on your mobile.

Tell the operator the number shown on the telephone box (this will enable them to pinpoint your exact location so that help can be provided quickly) and the details of your emergency. If you feel vulnerable, make this clear.

Return to a safe area near your vehicle so that you can see help arrive. There is far greater risk of an accident on the hard shoulder than of being attacked. If you feel threatened return to your car and lock all doors until any perceived danger has passed.

**DO NOT ATTEMPT REPAIRS, EVEN CHANGING A WHEEL, ON THE TRAFFIC LANE SIDE OF YOUR VEHICLE. SEEK ASSISTANCE**

**DO NOT CROSS THE TRAFFIC LANES IN ANY CIRCUMSTANCES**

## Driving Conditions

### Driving at night

Driving at night is more dangerous because visibility is reduced.

Darkness may reduce your ability to estimate speed and distance and to assess accurately the position of oncoming traffic. Also, your body naturally slows down at night – especially if you are driving when you would normally be asleep.

Remember that your eyes need time to adjust to darkness, especially when coming out of a brightly-lit area or building, such as motorway service stations or stretches of roads that have street lights. Keep a particular look out for pedestrians and cyclists who will be harder to see. Do not wear tinted glasses when driving at night.

*When driving at night make sure:*

- ✓ Your lights are switched on
- ✓ Your mirrors, and lights are clean to maximise vision
- ✓ You use information from the front and rear lights of other road users to indicate the path of the road. For example sharp bends
- ✓ You use information from 'cats eyes' and reflective markings to help you navigate
- ✓ You adjust your speed downwards when leaving brightly lit areas such as junctions and tunnels to allow time for your eyes to adjust properly
- ✓ You do not blind oncoming traffic with your headlights



## Weather conditions and seasonal hazards

The weather can cause all sorts of driving hazards, especially reduced visibility and slippery road surfaces. You need to adjust your driving accordingly.

**NEVER DRIVE IN SEVERE WEATHER CONDITIONS UNLESS ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL TO DO SO**

Listen to local/national weather broadcasts and travel bulletins.

### Is your vehicle weather ready?

Well maintained vehicles are less likely to have problems in extreme weather conditions.

Poor weather occurs throughout the year, but it's a good idea to have your vehicle fully serviced before winter starts and have the anti-freeze tested.

Pay particular attention to your tyres. Make sure they have sufficient tread depth and are not damaged. The legal minimum is 1.6mm. However the minimum as recommended by the RSA and Gardai is 3mm.

#### *Make Sure:*

- ✓ Your vehicle battery is fully charged
- ✓ Your tyres have sufficient tread depth and are not damaged
- ✓ Windscreen and windows are clean and that the windscreen washer bottle is filled with screen wash to the correct concentration of anti-freeze additive to prevent freezing. You may need to refill the windscreen washer more often over the winter months

### Rain

Rain reduces your ability to see and greatly increases the distance needed to slow down and stop. You will need about

TWICE your normal braking distance. There is an increased risk of skidding and, in heavy rain, aquaplaning

- ✓ Drive smoothly and plan your moves in plenty of time
- ✓ Use windscreen wipers appropriately. Check the condition of your wipers regularly, damaged wiper blades seriously affect your vision when wet
- ✓ Use your demister to avoid condensation on your internal windows and to improve vision. Make sure vents are not blocked and are working correctly
- ✓ Use dipped headlights to make sure other road users can see you

### **AQUAPLANING**

Aquaplaning is generally caused by driving too fast or at an excessive or inappropriate speed on a wet road. When the tyre tread cannot channel away enough water, the tyre(s) lose contact with the road and your car will float on a wedge of water.

Aquaplaning can be avoided by reducing speed in wet conditions. Having the correct tyre pressure and tyre tread depth will maximise your tyres' ability to maintain their road grip. If it happens, ease off the accelerator and brakes until your speed drops sufficiently for the car tyres to make contact with the road again.

### **DEALING WITH FLOODED ROADS.**

- ✓ Never enter floodwater unless you know the maximum depth. As a rule of thumb never enter water that is deeper than the middle of your vehicle wheels, [unless you have a specially designed vehicle and are trained for this type of driving]

- ✓ Do not attempt to cross if you have any doubt, it may be deeper than you think. If you are not sure of the water's depth, look for an alternative route
- ✓ Enter flood water at a very slow speed, in first gear and keeping the engine revs constant
- ✓ Be aware of the bow wave from approaching vehicles. Operate an informal 'give way' with approaching vehicles
- ✓ Remember to test your brakes a couple of times as soon as you are through the flood, this will help to remove any buildup of water around the brake discs and pads

### Driving in snow and ice

- ✓ If you decide to travel, let someone know where you are going and what time you hope to arrive, so that they can raise the alarm if you get into difficulties
- ✓ Think about taking warm clothes, boots a torch – it could be a long walk to a phone, if you do not have a mobile phone
- ✓ Consider keeping a couple of long-life energy bars and a bottle of drinking water in the glove box
- ✓ Clear your vehicle completely of snow and ice before you set off. (Make sure the heater is blowing warm air before setting off – it will keep your windscreen clear)



- ✓ Keep your vehicle well-ventilated. The car heater full-on can quickly make you drowsy
- ✓ Use dipped headlights
- ✓ Expect skids. Make sure you having something in the vehicle to help with grip in case you get stuck. E.g. cat litter, old carpet
- ✓ Only travel at a speed at which you can stop within the distance you can see to be clear
- ✓ Keep your speed down and give yourself time! Always reduce your speed smoothly and in plenty of time on slippery surfaces
- ✓ Avoid harsh braking and acceleration, or sharp steering. Slow down in plenty of time before bends and corners
- ✓ To brake on ice and snow without locking your wheels, get into a low gear earlier than normal, allow your speed to fall and use your brakes gently
- ✓ Expect the unexpected. Try to anticipate the actions of other road users
- ✓ Increase the gap between you and the vehicle in front. You may need up to TEN TIMES the normal distance for braking
- ✓ Stop frequently to clean the windows, wheel arches, lights and number plates

### **Driving in fog**

Fog is a major danger for drivers and the cause of many collisions. There is an increased risk of multiple-vehicle collisions on roads with higher speeds such as dual carriageways and motorways.

*If you must drive:*

- ✓ Follow weather forecasts and general advice to drivers in the local and national media

- ✓ Allow plenty of extra time for your journey
- ✓ Check your car before you set off. Make sure everything is in good working order, especially the lights and fog lights
- ✓ Slow down and keep a greater distance from other vehicles
- ✓ Switch on headlights and fog lamps if visibility is seriously reduced. If you can see the vehicles to your rear, the drivers behind can see you – switch off your rear fog lamps to avoid dazzling them. If you see rear fog lights on a vehicle ahead, switch off front fog lights as they may dazzle a driver ahead
- ✓ Use the demister and windscreen wipers
- ✓ Do not 'hang on' and follow blindly to the rear lights of the car in front as you will be too close to be able to brake safely
- ✓ Switch off distracting noises and open the window slightly so that you can listen for other traffic, especially at crossroads and junctions
- ✓ Beware of speeding up immediately after visibility improves slightly. In patchy or rolling fog you could find yourself 'driving blind' again only moments later
- ✓ If you break down, inform the emergency services and get the vehicle off the road as soon as possible. Never park on the road in fog and never leave it without hazard warning lights



## Low sunshine

- ✓ In winter and spring the angle of the sun in the sky will frequently be too low for your visor to prevent you being dazzled by low sunshine. If blinded by glare reduce your speed. You can reduce the effect of glare by keeping both the inside and outside of your windscreen clean and grease free
- ✓ If you wear sunglasses (with prescription lenses if necessary) take them off whenever the sun goes in. They should not be worn in duller weather or at night as they seriously reduce the ability to see.

## Hot weather

- ✓ Stay cool! Wear cool, loose, comfortable clothing and keep your vehicle well-ventilated. Carry wipes and cold drinks and take regular breaks to stretch your legs and get some fresh air
- ✓ Never ever drink and drive.
- ✓ Use your visor as the first measure to combat dazzle. Dark glasses help but should be taken off when you can manage without them. If the sun shines in your mirrors, adjust them to give you the best visibility with minimum glare
- ✓ Remember that other drivers will have similar problems and may not be able to see you. Keep your distance and lower your speed





# Dealing with Collisions and Emergencies

Your employer should have procedures for emergencies, such as accidents or breakdowns.

It is essential that you are familiar with, and follow these procedures.

*In the vehicle, keep copies of:*

- ✓ The emergency procedures of your employer
- ✓ Contact details for the person(s) to whom you should report emergencies
- ✓ Contact details of the breakdown firm and insurers your organisation uses and any reference numbers that you may need to quote
- ✓ A fully-charged mobile phone to summon help if necessary. Do not use the phone while driving
- ✓ A summary of the main points to remember is below, but always follow the procedures set down by your employer

## Collisions

If you are involved in a collision and are injured. Call for help on 999 or 112 immediately, if you are able to do so. If you are not able to do this, stay calm and wait for assistance.

The general steps to take in the event of a collision, are as follows:

- ✓ Stop. It is an offence not to stop, if your vehicle is involved and damage is caused to property or someone is injured

- ✓ Switch off your engine and use your hazard warning lights. Consider the use of a warning triangle/s but not on a Motorway
- ✓ Do not move injured passengers unless they are in immediate danger of further injury from other vehicles or from fire or explosion
- ✓ Call the emergency services immediately; provide them with information about the situation, any special circumstances (for example, if carrying oxygen bottles) and if any passengers have special needs
- ✓ If child passengers are present, ensure an adult remains with them
- ✓ Give first aid if required and if you are competent to do so
- ✓ If the emergency services are called, stay at the scene until they allow you to leave
- ✓ Obtain the names and addresses of all independent witnesses (if possible)
- ✓ Ensure the vehicle is roadworthy before planning to continue any journey
- ✓ If there is any injury or the names of people involved are not exchanged, you must report the accident to the Gardai as soon as possible, or in any case within 24 hours

### **RECORD AND REPORT THE COLLISION**

- ✓ If your vehicle was involved in the accident, sketch the accident scene (or take photos), if you can do so safely
- ✓ Report the accident to your employer. You may need to discuss the details with your line manager at a meeting following the collision. It is important that you discuss any

work related collision with your manager or employer so that appropriate steps are taken to avoid the same thing happening in future to you or one of your colleagues

## Breakdowns

- ✓ Move the vehicle off the carriageway (onto the hard shoulder on a motorway) and switch on the hazard warning lights
- ✓ If this is not possible, move it as far away from moving traffic as you can
- ✓ Make sure to put on a high visibility vest or jacket before you consider getting out of the vehicle, ensure passengers also wear a high visibility vest where provided
- ✓ Move passengers to a safe location as far away from the vehicle and other traffic as possible. No-one should stand between the vehicle and oncoming traffic
- ✓ On motorways or other busy roads, passengers should be taken onto the embankment or grass margin and as far from the traffic as is practicable
- ✓ Keep passengers together and keep children under constant supervision
- ✓ Telephone the emergency services or breakdown firm. Give them accurate details of the vehicle's location, and let them know if children or passengers with mobility problems are being carried
- ✓ Telephone your nominated contact person to tell them what has happened
- ✓ On a motorway, use the roadside emergency telephone as this will enable the Gardai to pinpoint your location

# Further reading

## **The Rules Of The Road**

[www.rulesoftheroad.ie](http://www.rulesoftheroad.ie)

## **Driving for Work**

A series of resources about many of the aspects covered in this booklet, including the joint HSA/RSA Guidance on Driving for Work are available at [www.hsa.ie](http://www.hsa.ie) and [www.rsa.ie](http://www.rsa.ie)

More detailed information on general road safety topics can be found at

[www.garda.ie](http://www.garda.ie)

or

[www.rsa.ie](http://www.rsa.ie).

Information on worker safety, health and welfare can be found at [www.hsa.ie](http://www.hsa.ie).

# Appendix 1

## Emergency Procedure in the Event of a Collision

If you are involved in a collision you should:

- ✓ Stop your vehicle at the scene or as close to it as possible. If possible do not obstruct traffic

If you are injured or think you might be injured, do not move, stay calm and wait for assistance.

- ✓ Ensure your own safety first. If exiting the vehicle wear a high visibility jacket or vest, which should be readily accessible in the vehicle
- ✓ Help any injured person. Call the Gardaí and emergency services if someone is hurt – dial 999 on a landline or 112 on a mobile phone
- ✓ Provide the following information to the other vehicle driver or property owner
  - ✓ The name and address of the driver in charge of the vehicle
  - ✓ The name and address of the owner of the vehicle
  - ✓ The registered number of the vehicle
  - ✓ The vehicle insurance details
- ✓ Record the details of the collision on the Incident Recording Form (Appendix 2)
- ✓ Contact your supervisor or manager as soon as you can to tell them about the collision. You should carry these contact details or keep them in the vehicle when you are working
- ✓ Take pictures of the scene, if possible
- ✓ Report the collision to the Health and Safety Authority (HSA), where relevant – for example, if someone is seriously injured or killed due to the collision. Details can be found at [www.hsa.ie](http://www.hsa.ie)

# Appendix 2

## Sample Incident Recording Form

Incident Details (To be completed by the driver)					
Date		Time of incident			
Location					
Driver details [name and Licence number and expiry date]					
Vehicle Registration Number					
Vehicle [Make/Model]					
Type of Incident	Collision	Product Spillage	Workplace accident	Near Miss	Load Shed/ Load Shift
(Tick ✓) Collision	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Speed Limit (Km/h)					
Weather Conditions					
Road Conditions					
Road Signs					
Garda Details (To be completed by the driver)					
Was there a Garda present?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Time Garda arrived at the scene?		
Garda Name,		Rank		Number	
Garda Station		Telephone Number			

<b>Details of Other Vehicle(s) involved (To be completed by the driver)</b>			
Vehicle[Make/Model]			
Vehicle Registration Number			
Vehicle Owner			
Address of Vehicle Owner			
Name of Driver			
Address of Driver			
Driver Telephone Number			
Insurance Company			
Policy Details	Number		Expiry date
Description of Damage to the Other Vehicle(s)			
<b>Details of Damage to Other Property (if any)</b>			
Type of property			
Owner's Name			
Address of Owner			
Description of Damage			

<b>Lost Load / Product Spillage / Contamination Details</b>	
Product Type?	
Quantity Spilled / Amount Lost?	
How Contaminated?	
<b>Injury Details</b>	
Was anyone injured?	
Was an Ambulance called?	
Name of the Injured Person	
Address of the Injured Person	
Description of Injury	
<b>Witness Details (if any)</b>	
Name of Witness	
Address	
Telephone Number	
<b>Brief Description of the Incident</b>	



<b>Incident Sketch</b> (make a rough sketch of the incident scene)			
Any remedial action taken at the incident scene?			
Photographs Taken?			
Driver's Signature		Date	
<b>Follow-up</b> (to be completed by the Driver's Manager/Supervisor)			
Has the driver the correct licence for the vehicle?			
Has the driver received the correct training for the vehicle?			
Has the driver received instruction, information and training (as appropriate) in relation to safe methods of work?			
Was the incident due to:(tick ✓ the correct option)			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Human error?</li> <li>• Mechanical failure?</li> <li>• Unsafe systems of work?</li> <li>• Road/weather conditions?</li> <li>• Other?</li> </ul>		<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	

Was the driver to blame in any way due to: (tick ✓ the correct option)	
• Carelessness?	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Dangerous driving?	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Loss of concentration?	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Misjudgment?	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Not following safe systems of work?	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Unfamiliar with the vehicle?	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Other?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Was the Incident avoidable?	
Does the Health & Safety Authority need to be notified (see <a href="http://www.hsa.ie">www.hsa.ie</a> )?	
Date of Notification	
<b>Remedial Action</b> (Outline what remedial action is required)	
Name of person carrying out the action	
Date by which the action will be carried out	
Signed	Date
<b>Details of Actions Completed</b>	
Date action completed	
Comments	
Signed	Date











## **Health & Safety Authority**

LoCall: 1890 289 389

(between 9am and 5pm, Monday to Friday)

Fax: 01 614 7125

Email: [wcu@hsa.ie](mailto:wcu@hsa.ie)

Overseas callers should call +353 1 614 7000

## **Road Safety Authority**

Moy Valley Business Park

Primrose Hill

Ballina

Co. Mayo

Customer Care Centre Lo-Call: 1890 40 60 40

## **An Garda Síochána Traffic Corps**

Garda National Traffic Bureau

Garda Headquarters

Phoenix Park

Dublin 8

Tel: +353 1 6661956/4

Fax: +353 1 6661958

E-mail: [traffic@garda.ie](mailto:traffic@garda.ie)



Údarás Um Shábháilteacht Ar Bhóithre  
Road Safety Authority