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For Immediate Use

RURAL ROADS ARE BIGGEST KILLERS; POLICE CHIEFS CALL FOR ACTION

DRIVERS on Scotland's rural roads are urged by Scotland's chief road policing officer to pay heed to the key 'profile factors' that could lead to becoming a rural road fatality.

Those key factors were outlined in a recently issued report by the Institute of Advanced Motorists (IAM) that revealed that Scottish drivers are three times more likely to have a fatal collision on a rural road than in an urban area.

"Between 2000 and 2005, the IAM study shows that there were 1,424 fatalities on Scottish rural roads and 458 on roads in urban areas," said Chief Constable John Vine (Tayside), Chair of the ACPOS Road Policing Business Area.

"The IAM's research shows that young and less experienced drivers are more prone to being involved in a serious or fatal collision on Scotland's rural roads," the Chief Constable said. "ACPOS and the Scottish Police Service want all drivers, but especially younger drivers, to think twice about their driving habits before getting into their vehicles."

In an effort to drive home the message, all eight Scottish police forces are taking part in a three-day '*Rural Road Awareness Weekend*', organised by ACPOS, from Friday, 23 November to Sunday, 25 November.

The campaign, the third in a series of four special '*Days of Action*' during 2007-08, is designed to make Scottish motorists more aware of the dangers of driving too fast or inappropriately on the country's rural roads. They will see an increase in high visibility policing patrols on the country's rural roads for three days.

On potential measures to reduce the number of young motorists killed on Scottish roads, Chief Constable Vine recalled the points raised at a young drivers' safety summit that he convened in September.

"There are a number of issues from that summit that the UK government is considering, regarding young drivers' attitudes and vulnerability, a structured approach to learning to drive that includes minimum learning periods, vehicle restriction, graduated licences and driver education combined with stronger penalties. We are waiting to see what measures are incorporated into the

impending legislation that will address the issue of reducing road fatalities, particularly on Scottish rural roads.”

Mr. Vine concluded: "Our message to all drivers and particularly to younger drivers is simple - Don't risk it! The consequences are not only points on your licence and a fine but potentially death or serious injury.”

Transport Minister Stewart Stevenson said: “Day in, day out, Scotland’s police officers witness the awful consequences of road accidents on Scotland’s roads. At first hand, they experience the devastation of lives being lost needlessly.

“Sadly, this is all too evident on rural roads where a combination of overconfidence, misjudgement, and a lack of experience often make a deadly cocktail which many do not recover from.

“This campaign by Scotland’s eight police forces is so important. I hope drivers of all ages, but particularly younger drivers, pay attention to what is being said.

“If they don’t, we will see more tragic deaths, and more families being torn apart by the heartbreak of a loved one being lost.”

“We have recently set up an expert group on road safety which will look at what more can be done to improve road safety across Scotland. This group is made up of some of the leading thinkers on road safety, and will meet for the first time later this month. Their views will help inform a new 10-year road safety strategy for Scotland.”

IAM director for Scotland Neil Greig said: “Rural roads are Scotland’s biggest killers and enforcement clearly has a central role to play in getting the message over that bad driving on them will lead to fatalities or life changing injuries.

“Rural roads give no margin for error and inexperienced drivers must treat them with respect. Young men, in particular, are most at risk and must realise that speeding, racing or showing off with their mates on a country road could lead to consequences that will stay with them for the rest of their, and many others’, lives.”

Road Safety Scotland's Michael McDonnell said: "The majority of our road deaths in Scotland happen on rural roads, many of them at the weekend involving young people who are in a car where the driver has made a small error, but that, combined with going too fast for the conditions, leads to the type of tragedy we hear about on a Monday morning.

“My appeal is to the parents of young people to keep an eye on what your children are doing and who they're heading off with at the weekend.”

-end-

NOTES TO NEWS EDITORS:

THE IAM study, "Rural road accidents in Great Britain: Analysis of accident data 2000 – 2005" by Jean Hopkin, IAM Research Services, shows that: during that period:

1. The number of road accident fatalities in Scotland were: 1424 on rural roads (75.6%) and 458 on roads in urban areas (24.4%);
2. The number of fatal collisions in Scotland for different road types were: 62 on motorways (4.35%); 157 on dual carriageway 'A' roads (11.03%); 839 on other 'A' roads (58.92%); 221 on 'B' roads (15.52%); and, 145 on 'C' and unclassified roads (10.18%).
3. 131 collisions were with more than one fatality in Scotland during this six-year period (10.% of all fatalities);
4. In Scotland, a larger proportion of road collision fatalities and serious injuries occurred in rural areas with 75% of fatalities and 58% of serious injuries;
5. In Scotland, 22% of the casualties on rural roads had fatal or serious injuries.
6. Overall, 15% of casualties in Scotland with fatal or serious injuries were on motorways; 21% on dual carriage A roads; 25% on other A roads; 22% on B roads; and, 19% on C and unclassified roads.

Further information on the study can be found at www.iamtrust.org.uk.

The key factors which comprise the 'profile' of a young potential rural road fatality are: male, under 25 years of age, driving a relatively modern car, on a dry road at a bend in the "B" road, during the summer, on a weekend, at night, with more than one person in the car.

The key factors which comprise the 'profile' for older drivers on a rural road are different and comprise: a typical middle-aged, male driver, in a relatively new car, on a dry road, in the summer, at the weekend, involving two vehicles, with few people in the car, involved in overtaking away from bends on an "A" road.

For further information or to arrange an interview with Chief Constable John Vine, please contact Graham MacDonell at ACPOS Communications on 0141 435 1241 or 07771 842 881 after hours.