

DRIVERS' ATTITUDES TO SPEEDING UNCHANGED; ONE IN TEN MOTORISTS STILL FAIL TO WEAR SEAT BELT

Despite improved road engineering, more speed signage and the introduction of speed cameras, many Scottish drivers' attitudes to speed limits have not changed, according to Scottish Government research on the issue.

While 99 percent of drivers think that driving over the drink-driving limit is a very serious issue, only 23 per cent of drivers thought that driving at 80 miles per hour in a 70 mph zone was very serious.

"Research has shown that in 57 per cent of all road crashes in Scotland, speed is likely to have been a contributory factor," said Assistant Chief Constable Jim Green, Secretary of the ACPOS Road Policing Business Area.

That reminder comes as the Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland (ACPOS) launches its second of four days of awareness during the year on Monday, 21 April, aimed at motorists who choose to speed or fail to wear their seatbelts.

The launch will take place outside of the Scottish Parliament Building at 11:30 a.m. and will feature the introduction of the new livery for the Safety Camera Partnership vehicles.

"High visibility patrols will be out on the country's roads today targeting motorists who are speeding or not wearing seatbelts with back seat passengers being a main focus for police officers," Mr. Green explained.

Although protection from death and serious injury in road crashes provided by seatbelts has been widely recognised since front seatbelt wearing became the law in Scotland in January 1983, 11.4 per cent of all vehicle occupants have been observed not wearing an appropriate restraint, according to the same research.

"The obstinacy towards obeying the posted speed limit has been one of two long-standing bad habits of Scottish motorists," added Mr. Green. "The other bad habit has been by rear seat passengers who continually fail to comply with legislation that is now 15 years old."

Although the law was extended to cover back seats in 1993, research conducted for the Scottish Government has found that 22 percent of rear seat passengers fail to 'buckle up'.

'It goes without saying that every time you get into a vehicle – if there is a seat belt, use it!'

Justice Cabinet Secretary Kenny MacAskill: “The Scottish Government is committed to cutting the toll of death and injury on our roads. Too many young people are dying needlessly on our roads. Some young people have a belief that they will never have an accident – the statistics tell us that they can and they will if they continue to drive too fast.

“That is why we are currently developing a 10-year ‘*Road Safety Strategy*’ and have set up a group of some of the leading thinkers on road safety to advise on what more could be done to save lives.

“However, this research shows that speeding continues to be a major problem on our roads. The Scottish Camera Safety Programme plays an important role in improving safety on our roads by targeting areas prone to speeding or crashes.

“The latest ACPOS ‘*Day of Action*’ sends a clear message that speeding is unacceptable and highlights the importance of wearing a seat belt. The message is clear: ‘Break the law and you will be caught.’”

Safety Camera Programme Director Jim Dale said: “The main aim of Scottish Safety Camera Programme is help reduce the number of people injured in road crashes by enforcing speed limits at locations where there is a history of fatal and serious crashes and also an identified problem with speeding.

“The intention is not to catch people speeding but to influence them into driving within the speed limits. To help achieve this, a highly conspicuous national livery for all the Safety Camera Programme enforcement vehicles has been developed. The vehicles have been deliberately made highly visible in order that they will act as a consistent visual deterrent to those drivers that place more importance on the progression of their own journey rather than on the safety of other road users.

“It is well established that as speed increases the number and severity of crashes also increases. It is important, therefore, that drivers recognise that speed limits are in place to protect the public and that it is unacceptable to exceed these limits irrespective of where they are driving in Scotland.”

“Drivers have been slowing down on Scottish roadways since programmes such as the eight Safety Camera Partnerships have been put in place, according to research,” added Mr. Green. “With the Partnerships’ new livery, motorists anywhere throughout Scotland will have an easily recognizable reminder to slow down and live.”

In concluding, Mr. Green said: “I am pleased to hear that the vast majority of drivers and passengers wear their seat belts. But we want every one to wear their seat belt, particularly rear seat passengers as they risk injury not only to themselves but can cause death or injury to front seat passengers as well.

“Our double-barrelled message is ‘Buckle up and slow down - your life or the life of others - could depend on you driving appropriately to the road conditions and wearing a seat belt!’”

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NOTE TO NEWS EDITORS:

ACC Jim Green will attend the launch of the ACPOS Seatbelt/Speeding 'Day of Action' outside the Scottish Parliament Buildings on Monday, April 21, 2008 at 11:30 a.m. with Kenny MacAskill, Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Safety Camera Partnership Director Jim Dale, who will be overseeing the launch of the Partnership's new livery for Safety Camera Vehicles throughout Scotland.

Mr. MacAskill and Mr. Green will be available for photographs involving the Safety Camera Partnership vehicles; reporters, photographers and videographers are requested not to identify or visually identify SCP staff.

For further information, please contact Graham MacDonell, ACPOS Communications at: 0141 435 1241 or (after hours and on Monday morning) 07771 842 881.