



ASSOCIATION OF CHIEF POLICE OFFICERS IN SCOTLAND

NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Use

LESS TRAFFIC ON COUNTRY ROADS DOES NOT MEAN THAT THEY ARE SAFER

SCOTLAND'S COUNTRY ROADS may be quiet compared with urban roads but that does not mean that they are safer, stresses one of Scotland's top road police chiefs.

Assistant Chief Constable Jim Green (Strathclyde), Secretary of the Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland (ACPOS) Road Policing Business Area, said, "Two out of three road deaths and over half of serious injury collisions in Scotland occur on non built-up roads.

"But," he added, "motorists have to remain vigilant as although research has shown that while the number of fatalities on non built-up roads has decreased over the past few years, it has decreased at a much lower rate than fatal collisions in built-up areas."

In an effort to drive home the message, all eight Scottish police forces are taking part in a three-day '*Awareness Weekend*', organised by ACPOS, from Friday, 28 March to Sunday, 30 March.

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

Drivers on Scotland's country roads are urged by Assistant Chief Constable Green to pay heed to the main factors that could lead to becoming a country road fatality: driver behaviour, road conditions and vehicle defects.

"Looking at driver behaviour, there is a clearly established link between speed and accident frequency," Mr. Green emphasised. "And higher speeds lead to more severe accidents with young male drivers most likely to be driving at excessive speeds.

Among some of the key factors to keep in mind when driving on Scotland's country roads, are narrow roadways, tight bends, blind spots, the condition of the road surface, reduced road markings and slow moving agricultural vehicles.

Drivers should drive according to the conditions, adjust their speed accordingly and ensure that everybody in their vehicle is wearing a seatbelt.

According to Scottish Government research, the most common crash types on country roads include head-on collisions, incidents where drivers lose control causing their car to leave the road and junction collisions.

"Research also shows that young drivers are disproportionately represented in country road crashes," Assistant Chief Constable Green concluded. "Our message to all drivers and particularly to younger drivers is – 'Drive at the appropriate speed!' Country roads present far more challenges to motorists than many may realise. The consequences of speeding are not only points on your licence and a fine but death or serious injury - especially if you don't wear your seatbelt."

Transport Minister Stewart Stevenson said:

"Scotland's police officers are the front line. Every day, they have to witness the awful consequences of lives being lost needlessly as they arrive first on the scene at road traffic accidents across the country.

"Sadly, many of these accidents involve younger drivers, and many occur on country roads. This campaign by Scotland's eight police forces is so important and it has my full support.

"I hope drivers of all ages pay attention to what is being said. Our police officers don't want to see any more tragedies, they don't want to see any more young people dying, and they don't want to have to knock on any more doors to tell a family that a loved one has been lost. The advice being given during this country roads campaign is about saving lives. I hope drivers across Scotland not only listen to that advice, but act on it.

"In government, we have recently brought together some of the leading thinkers on road safety from across the country to help advise on what more we can all do to reduce the number of deaths on Scotland's roads. Their views will help inform a new 10-year road safety strategy for Scotland to be published in the summer."

Road Safety Scotland's Michael McDonnell said: "The majority of our road deaths in Scotland happen on country 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."

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NOTES TO NEWS EDITORS:

For further information or to arrange an interview with Assistant Chief Constable Jim Green, please contact:

1. David Steele of ACPOS Communications at 0141 435 1240 or 07771 842 881 after hours on Thursday;
2. Graham MacDonell of ACPOS Communications at 0141 435 1241 on Friday during business hours.

BACKGROUNDER - ACCIDENTS ON SCOTTISH COUNTRY ROADS

As extracted from the Scottish Government's Transport Research Series, "Rural Road Safety – A Literature Review", Social Government Social Research, 2005:

- Non built-up roads accounted for 75 percent of fatalities and 52 percent of killed and seriously injured combined in 2003 in Scotland;
- The number of fatalities on non built-up roads has decreased at a much lower rate than on built-up roads over the last few years;
- Local 'B' and 'A' class roads have the highest accident rates (per vehicle kilometre) in Scotland;
- Fatalities on Scottish non built-up roads comprise 67 percent car occupants, 16 percent motorcyclists, and 17 others (buses, coaches, vans, trucks)
- Most car occupant (70%), goods vehicle occupant (73%) and motorcyclist (62%) fatalities occur on built-up roads.

For more information and statistics on traffic accidents in Scotland, go to the following Scottish Government publication website:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/204167/0054362.pdf>

and Tables 5, 6, 7 and 8 on pages 95 to 100

For information on the consultation process currently underway for the Scottish Road Safety Strategy, go to the following Scottish Government publication website: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/211065/0055777.pdf>

Previous Rural Road Awareness Weekends co-ordinated by ACPOS during the fiscal year 2007-2008 were:

1. May 16 – 18, 2007
2. August 22 – 24, 2007
3. November 21 – 23, 2007