

October 2009

Welcome to this new edition of *Update*. This edition provides you with an update on a number of issues including the Environment Minister's meeting with DINAC, display of licences and, for the first time, our colleagues from Road Safety Division have contributed and provided an update of the Road Safety Strategy.

I hope you will find the contents of this edition both interesting and informative.

MINISTER'S MEETING WITH DINAC

Following an invitation from the Chairman of DINAC, Seamus Higgins, Mr Edwin Poots MLA, the Minister for the Environment attended the DINAC meeting held on 21st September 2009 at the Glenavon House Hotel in Cookstown.

The meeting gave representatives from the ADI industry an opportunity to discuss Road Safety issues directly with the Minister. The event was a huge success and all attendees were inspired by the Minister's enthusiasm and his genuine interest in the issues raised.

Some of the issues discussed included illegal instruction, the trainee licence scheme, changes to the current driving test and DINAC'S proposals to improve road safety and reduce the number of fatalities on Northern Ireland roads.

The Minister confirmed that road safety was an area of top priority for him. He welcomed DINAC's proposals and explained he wanted to set up a forum with interested parties to consider Road Safety issues and requested 2 or 3 representatives from DINAC to work with him to take these issues forward. The Chairman agreed he would contact the Minister directly with contact names.

MANDATORY DISPLAY OF LICENCES

The Agency is currently in discussion with Departmental Solicitors in relation to the commencement of the legislation for mandatory display of ADI licences. We are pleased that the production of the licences, for which we have received photographs, is near completion and these will be issued as soon as practicably possible – we have been advised that it is not good practice to issue licences which quotes legislation not yet

commenced. A letter explaining the reason for delay will be issued to all ADIs and we encourage the few who have yet to send photographs to do so as soon as possible to ensure you will have a valid licence to display when it becomes mandatory.

ILLEGAL INSTRUCTION

In our continued efforts to combat illegal instruction, an enforcement exercise was carried out by Agency staff on 2 September 2009 in the North Belfast/Newtownabbey area.

Several vehicles displaying L-plates or driving school logos were stopped and the instructors asked to produce their ADI or PDI licences. I am pleased to report that no illegal instruction was detected during the operation.

Whilst the Agency is keen to continue with the exercises, current financial and resourcing restraints will impact on how often they can be carried out in the immediate future.

In the event of someone wanting to report illegal instruction, the PSNI representative at the recent DINAC meeting gave members a list of Road Policing Inspectors for each area who should be contacted if you have evidence to suggest illegal activities. If you require the details please contact your local DINAC representative.

OVERUSE OF DRIVING TEST ROUTES

The Agency has again received complaints from concerned residents regarding the overuse of driving test routes for carrying out driving lessons and we have provided information below about particular 'trouble spots'.

Cookstown

The PSNI contacted the Agency regarding a large number of complaints they have received from concerned residents about the overuse of the Lissan Drive area for driving instruction.

We have been told that PSNI officers spoke to a number of instructors in the area a few months ago who all agreed to curtail their use of the neighbourhood. However, residents have advised that use of the area has escalated again and the road is constantly blocked with cars carrying out manoeuvres.

Larne

A complaint has been received from Sammy Wilson MP MLA on behalf of constituents regarding the overuse of the Tureagh Park and Carmond Drive areas.

Complaints have also been received from concerned residents about the overuse of the Edward Avenue area for driving instruction.

Portadown

Complaints have been received about the overuse of the Bracken Lodge area in Portadown for driving instruction.

The Agency designs its' test routes to minimise inconvenience to residents as far as possible and we expect ADIs to stay off the approved test routes until the latter stages of training. It is fair to say that we all have a responsibility to try and resolve such problems and we would ask you to respond positively to the concerns raised by the residents.

ROAD SAFETY STRATEGY

The Department of the Environment is currently working on developing a new road safety strategy for introduction in 2010, two years ahead of the original timescale for conclusion of the current Strategy. This, in part, reflects the progress made over the life of the current strategy. Two targets were set in the Road Safety Strategy for achievement by 2012. The first, to reduce the number of people killed or seriously injured by 33%, was surpassed in 2008 when the number of people killed or seriously injured fell to a level 37% below the baseline. The second, to reduce the number of children killed or seriously injured by 50%, was achieved in 2007 and surpassed in 2008 when the level fell to 59% below the baseline.

There is no room for complacency, however, and the number of road deaths in Northern Ireland remains a constant concern. So far this year there have been 94 deaths compared with 77 last year. The development of a new road safety strategy gives everyone the opportunity to consider new measures to complement those that we know are working and to ensure that the overall trend of casualty reduction continues.

As ADIs will know, much of our road safety problems could be summed up in one phrase: 'bad driving behaviour'. Virtually all road traffic collisions are caused by people, mostly drivers, behaving dangerously or simply ignoring the law. 'Excessive speed for the conditions' remains the principle causation factor followed by 'drink or drug driving'. However, although it includes over 20 different possible factors, driver carelessness accounted for 48% of deaths and serious injuries on our roads during the first five years of the current strategy.

Young people are also over-represented in road traffic collisions. Evidence shows that while they account for only 11% of licensed drivers, young people aged between 17 and 24 were responsible for 38% of the 383 fatal collisions between 2003 and 2007 and 32% of the 3,226 fatal and serious collisions which involved a car or light goods vehicle. The new strategy will clearly seek, in particular, to identify measures that positively impact on this vulnerable age group.

In advance of formal consultation planned for early next year, the Department wrote to a number of interest groups, including ADIs, and would welcome views on what could be done to improve the safety of road users, particularly new and novice drivers. If you have any views you would like to offer at this time please contact Pauline Moore or Maura Magee at roadsafety.strategy2010@doeni.gov.uk or by telephone on 028 9054 0988.

ADI ASSOCIATIONS POSTERS

Over the past few months the Agency received numerous requests to display posters on behalf of different Associations promoting a range of different activities. Unfortunately it is not possible to accommodate all such requests and in the interests of fairness, we have no option but to consider the display of promotional posters.

We also considered those who sought and were granted permission to display material. Therefore, in the interests of all, it has been decided that non DVA posters will be removed from Test Centres on 31 March 2010 thereby giving a further 5 months 'advertising' to those already displaying information.

Subsequently DVA will continue to display information relevant to ADIs such as fees, telephone numbers of Theory Test Centres etc. I appreciate this may not be a popular decision for some but I trust you appreciate the reason for the decision and the position of the Agency as an independent testing authority.

IN-CAR CAMERA and/or AUDIO RECORDING EQUIPMENT

The Agency recently received an inquiry in respect of in-car camera and/or audio recording equipment designed for the use of ADIs as a teaching aid. It is recognized that this equipment may have training benefits. However, we wish to advise if this equipment is installed in any vehicle being used for DVA Testing purposes it should be immobilized before the test commences.

To avoid tests being delayed or cancelled, ADIs should make prior arrangements with the Centre Manager on how the immobilization can be satisfactorily achieved. The Agency also wish to inform instructors that recording of an examiner during a test may be a breach of the Data Protection Act and any evidence that this is happening will be reported to the Information Commissioner.

ADVERTISING

The Agency is aware of considerable ongoing advertising by Driving Schools and Instructors and fully understands the benefits. We wish to remind all that information included in advertisements should be accurate and factually correct. In order to avoid falling foul of regulations we recommend, prior to placing an advertisement, you check with both the Planning Service and Trading Standards Agencies to ensure it is legal.

COMMENTS

Comments, views or ideas on any of the items mentioned in this *Update* or suggestions for subjects we should cover in future editions would be most welcome. We are happy to receive these by telephone to 028 9068 5206, email to angie.mclenaghan@doeni.gov.uk or by letter to Angie at DVA, Balmoral Road.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ann McCabe", with a horizontal line underneath.

ANN McCABE
ADI Registrar