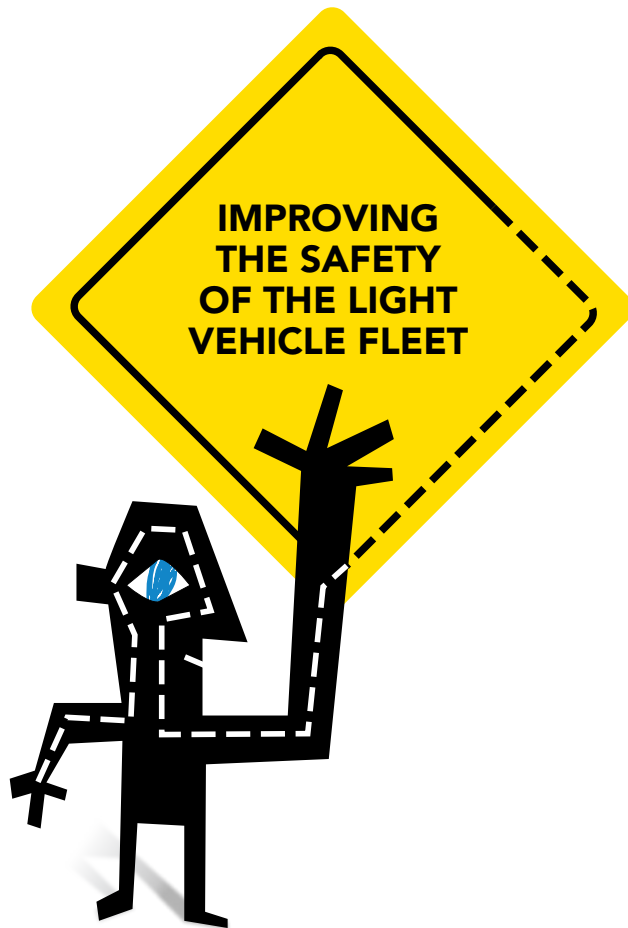


2020

AREAS OF MEDIUM CONCERN





WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

- Since 2000, the safety of our light vehicle fleet has improved by four percent each year as safer vehicles have replaced less safe ones.
- However, the average age of our light vehicles is 12 years, which means the road safety gains are much less than other countries are obtaining.
- Vehicle improvements reduced rural road fatalities by about 15.7 percent and urban fatalities by about 20 percent between 1997 and 2005.

There have been major advances in vehicle safety technologies over the past decade. Features such as air bags, electronic stability control and anti-lock brakes are becoming more common and standard in new vehicles.

Vehicle safety technologies help improve road safety in three main ways:

- Preventing crashes (eg through electronic stability control)
- Protecting drivers and passengers if there is a crash (eg airbags)
- Protecting other road users (eg less rigid vehicle front structure).

Given their benefits, it is crucial that vehicles with the latest safety features enter the New Zealand fleet as soon as possible. There are three key challenges we need to face over the next decade to capture the advances in vehicle safety technologies:

- *How can we ensure that a large proportion of vehicles entering the fleet have the highest possible safety ratings?* Over 50 percent of the vehicles entering the Australian fleet have at least a four star safety rating for occupant protection. The equivalent figure for new vehicles entering New Zealand is only about 15-20 percent.
- *What can we do to speed up the turnover of the vehicle fleet to newer safer vehicles?* Older vehicles generally have fewer safety features and the occupants are more vulnerable if there is a crash. There is a risk the economic downturn will mean that new cars become less affordable.
- *How can we ensure that the safety features on our vehicles are well maintained and operate as well as they are intended to?* Vehicles need to be well maintained to ensure their safety features continue to operate properly. In 2006 vehicle defects were a contributing factor in 6 percent of fatal crashes and 3 percent of injury crashes. Economic conditions may mean people will defer vehicle repairs and maintenance.

HOW CAN WE IMPROVE THE SAFETY OF OUR LIGHT VEHICLES?

The suggested initiatives for improving the safety of light vehicles are to:

- Mandate electronic stability control (ESC) on all vehicles entering the fleet
- Promote the rapid uptake of advanced vehicle safety systems
- Reduce the average age of the light vehicle fleet
- Revise warrant of fitness (WoF) standards to ensure that advanced vehicle safety systems are properly maintained and working effectively.

Mandate Electronic Stability Control (ESC) on all vehicles entering the fleet

Many studies indicate that ESC could reduce loss of control crashes by 20 to 30 percent. For certain types of vehicle, such as SUVs, the figure is more like a 60 percent reduction.

ESC is now included as standard equipment in 70 to 80 percent of new cars¹⁹ coming into New Zealand, although the rate of increase has slowed recently. When used imports are taken into account it is estimated around 40 percent of the cars that entered our fleet last year had this safety feature. Europe, Canada, Australia and the USA are all moving to mandate ESC in their vehicle fleets by 2011– 2012. Analysis undertaken in Canada, Victoria and the USA illustrates the benefits from mandating this technology significantly outweigh the costs.

19 Light commercial vans and utes are excluded in this analysis.

ESC currently adds about \$500 to the cost of a new car although it is expected to become a standard feature in most vehicle models over time with the cost built into the purchase price.

Promotional activities will increase the uptake of ESC over the next decade, but it could happen faster if we support it with regulation. Many of the countries we import our vehicles from are already mandating ESC. We could select a cut-off year after which it would be compulsory for all new and used light vehicles entering the country to have ESC fitted as standard. This could be around 2011–2015, which is the period other countries are considering.

Promote advanced vehicle safety systems

Overseas experience shows that consumer awareness programmes balanced with regulation are the best ways to increase the uptake of safer vehicles.

For instance, using this approach Sweden achieved a 90 percent uptake of ESC in all new cars. Australia is following suit.

We could increase consumer awareness about the benefits of buying a vehicle with the latest safety features. This in turn would encourage importers to bring in more of them. The recent campaign promoting ESC is a good example of this cost-effective strategy that has been very successful in influencing vehicle manufacturers in Europe to make safer cars.

There are three ways we could help consumers to choose safer vehicles:

- The government could provide consumers with safety information. The Right Car website already has information on many newer makes and models, but we could extend it to rate older vehicles too.
- Motor vehicle dealers could give buyers safety information at point of sale (this could be optional or

mandatory). This gives consumers peace of mind that the safety features they want are in fact on the vehicle.

- Develop incentives such as working with the insurance industry to lower insurance premiums for safer vehicles.

Reduce the average age of the light vehicle fleet

Our vehicle fleet is older than that of many other countries. We would like to change this so that more vehicles have the latest safety features. We can influence the age of the fleet in a number of ways: by promoting advanced vehicle safety systems, preventing older vehicles from entering the fleet, and encouraging the disposal of older vehicles.

About 70 percent of our new vehicles are purchased for company fleets (eg hire cars). We will encourage fleet buyers to purchase vehicles with the latest safety features. The government will lead by example in its own fleet purchases.

The 2007 Vehicle Exhaust Emissions Rule will help (especially on used imports) by restricting older vehicles that do not meet specified emissions standards from entering the fleet. However, the effect of the rule will lessen over time, so new initiatives may be needed to ensure that the age of vehicles entering the fleet does not start to increase.

As well as promoting safer vehicles we can also provide incentives, or go a step further and restrict the entry of older vehicles. For example we could only allow cars eight years old or less to be imported.

This would reduce the number of older vehicles coming into the country, but affordability issues would need to be considered. People could hold on to their existing vehicles for longer if new ones are considered too expensive which would in turn impact on vehicle importers.

We could also provide incentives to speed up the exit of older vehicles from the fleet. One way to do this would be to reward owners for scrapping older vehicles. Vehicle owners could be offered an incentive to move from less safe older vehicles to newer, safer ones. This would have an immediate safety benefit, although further analysis to quantify the level of benefits in relation to the costs is required.

Revise WoF standards to ensure that advanced vehicle safety systems continue to function for at least the design life of the vehicle

Advanced vehicle safety features (eg air bags) must continue to function properly for the life of the vehicle to get the greatest safety benefit.

The current WoF inspection is to ensure that a vehicle's structure is sound and its parts working properly. However, it does not check advanced safety systems, such as airbags and electronic stability control, to ensure they are working as they were designed to do. We could strengthen the WoF inspection to cover these features. There could also be some adjustment to the time period between WoF inspections, which could perhaps be relaxed for new vehicles. Further analysis of the potential costs and benefits of this proposal will need to be undertaken.

DISCUSSION POINTS

Do you support the proposed initiatives to help make our vehicle fleet safer?

What initiative is most important to you?

What else could we do?

Do you agree that we should make electronic stability control mandatory for cars entering the fleet by a particular date?



WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

PEDESTRIANS

- In each year over the period 2003-2007, an average of 671 pedestrians were hospitalised and 43 were killed.
- About 400 pedestrians are admitted to hospital each year due to trips and falls. They tend to be elderly and are more likely to be injured if they fall. Poorly maintained footpaths are a particular hazard for the elderly.
- The number of pedestrians killed per year and the rate per 100,000 people are both falling.
- The number of pedestrian injuries has not changed in the last 15 years, despite the decline in walking by children who are most at risk.

CYCLISTS

- In each year over the period 2003-2007, an average of 280 cyclists were hospitalised and 10 were killed from crashes involving a vehicle.
- Cyclists were not at fault in over 70 percent of all cyclist-vehicle crashes in which they were injured or killed.
- An additional 1900 cyclists were hospitalised in 2007 for crashes that did not involve a vehicle. Most of these crashes were on public roads.
- The number of cyclists killed or injured has been trending upwards.

Pedestrians currently account for 10 percent of all road deaths and cyclists two percent. However, in urban areas, pedestrians and cyclists account for 30 percent of all road deaths. The majority of crashes involving a cyclist or pedestrian and a motor vehicle occur on urban roads, particularly busy urban arterials where vehicle speeds tend to be higher.

Pedestrians and cyclists are sometimes called 'vulnerable road users', mainly because they come off worse in a crash with a vehicle. This implies these active modes of transport are inherently dangerous, but they can be safer if we address the needs of pedestrians and cyclists.

The evidence shows that the most obvious way to improve safety for pedestrians and cyclists, especially in urban areas, is to moderate vehicle speeds. The faster a driver is going the harder it is for them to avoid hitting someone in their path. The speed at which a cyclist or pedestrian is hit determines how seriously they will be injured.

A cyclist/pedestrian hit at 30 km/h has a 90 percent chance of survival, but if they are hit by a vehicle at 60 km/h the survival chances are only 15 percent.

There is a proven safety in numbers effect for cyclists and, to a lesser extent, pedestrians. The more people there are cycling or walking, the safer each person is, as drivers become more accustomed to seeing them. This is a mutually reinforcing cycle. We must also improve safety perceptions of walking and cycling as perceived risk may turn people away.

The current trends highlight the significant potential to improve safety for pedestrians and cyclists, but it is going to require more effort.

The initiatives in the speed and roads/roadsides sections are the most important for pedestrians and cyclists. They are supported by the following proposals.

HOW CAN WE IMPROVE THE SAFETY OF CYCLISTS AND PEDESTRIANS?

The suggested initiatives for safer walking and cycling are to:

- Improve techniques to integrate safety into land use planning
- Strengthen requirements in driver licence test so drivers are more aware of pedestrians' and cyclists' safety needs
- Have stronger promotion of road user education, including targeted messages and more national promotion, such as 'share the road'
- Increase cyclist skills training in schools
- Increase coverage of temporary lower speed limits around schools.

Improve techniques to integrate safety into land use planning

It is important to improve access and safety for the one-third of New Zealanders who do not drive. It is often difficult for people in residential areas to safely walk or cycle to services, such as shops, schools and public transport. This is usually caused by poor access, such as a lack of safe crossing points across a busy road.

There are two main ways we can address this problem. Firstly, we could strengthen codes of practice and standards for new subdivisions. This would help ensure that road safety is fully considered at the planning stage.

Secondly, we can improve safety in existing communities. One method we already use is neighbourhood accessibility plans (NAPs). This method evolved from the 'safer routes to schools' programme.

NAPs are community initiatives that identify and resolve local road safety issues. The roads, pavements, intersections, signs and facilities are improved where possible so that they are safe for local people, particularly children and the elderly. These are often supported by education and enforcement campaigns.

If parents perceive it is safer, they are more likely to allow their children to use other modes of transport rather than driving them to school. This would help to reduce congestion and improve public health.

There have been many successful NAP projects that have delivered substantial safety benefits. For example, a NAP in Nelson CBD led to a significant reduction in pedestrian and cyclist crashes and a drop in crime in the first two years of the programme. The benefits exceeded the costs by over 4 to 1.

We want to ensure that methods such as NAPs are as cost-effective as possible and it is relatively straightforward for communities to apply for assistance. We will look to strengthen and build on these existing methods.

The main causes of local road safety problems may lie outside the immediate local area. For example, the road network may encourage commuter traffic to take shortcuts through neighbourhoods. It will be important that local initiatives, such as NAPS, are integrated into district plans and regional road safety plans.

Strengthen requirements in the driver licence test so drivers are more aware of pedestrians' and cyclists' safety needs

Many drivers are unaware of the rules around pedestrians and cyclists, such as allowing cyclists sufficient room when passing.

We could provide more information for novice drivers then test if they are aware of their responsibilities toward other road users. A novice driver would have to demonstrate knowledge and awareness of road rules regarding pedestrians and cyclists. This would encourage more specific driver training on how to safely share the road with pedestrians and cyclists. This would be a relatively low cost change to implement.

Stronger promotion of road user education on pedestrians and cyclists, including targeted messages and more national promotion

To support the initiative above we could also raise awareness of the need for all road users to share the road safely. There are national Share the Road guidelines available from the New Zealand Transport Agency, but promotion is left to local or regional authorities and very few run campaigns.

We could encourage more considerate and safe behaviour from all road users. For drivers the key messages are to take extra care around pedestrians and cyclists. This includes giving them sufficient space on the road and not parking in dangerous places.

For pedestrians and cyclists the key messages are to comply with the road rules (eg stopping at red lights and crossing on the 'green man') and to take safety precautions (eg being visible at night). As well as improving safety this would go some way to gaining more respect from drivers. Such a national campaign would have costs associated with advertising and publicity.

Greater promotion of cyclist skills training in schools

We could increase the provision of cycle skills training in schools. Cyclist training has been successful overseas, mainly because it helps children to become proficient and safe on a bicycle at an early age.

When combined with measures like low speed zones and safer routes to school, this helps parents to feel confident about their children cycling to school.

Christchurch has had a successful and cost-effective programme (Cycle Safe) for several years. This has equipped children with safe cycling skills and also contributed to an increase in cycling. Children who have gone through the programme are also less likely to have a crash. The benefits of this programme outweigh the costs by almost eight to one. The Police also conduct some cyclist skills training nationwide, but their resources are limited.

Support the roll-out of strongly enforced variable speed limits around schools and address the issue of rural school bus safety

This initiative will significantly improve safety around schools if backed with strong enforcement. Variable speed signs help to educate road users to consider the needs of school children. A variable speed limit of 40 km/h is introduced before and after school, and at other busy times. Police apply a lower tolerance level.

This initiative will be closely linked to existing locally driven programmes such as school travel plans and neighbourhood accessibility plans. It will also build on the existing resources on school bus safety produced by the New Zealand Transport Agency.

There is also an issue surrounding rural school safety, particularly when children are getting on and off school buses. Vehicles are required to reduce speed to 20 km/h while a school bus has stopped, but we know

many drivers do not obey this rule. A second problem is the speed at which drivers pass rural schools. Speed enforcement is also more difficult than it is in urban areas.

We could investigate options for improving safety around rural schools and school buses.

DISCUSSION POINTS

Do you support the suggested initiatives to make walking and cycling safer?

Which one is most important to you?

What else could we do?



What is the problem?

- Heavy vehicles represent approximately seven percent of the total distance travelled on New Zealand’s roads.
- In 2008, crashes involving heavy vehicles accounted for 18 percent of the road toll and 19 percent of total injuries. This equates to 65 deaths, 258 serious injuries and 1,144 minor injuries.
- In 2008, the social cost of heavy vehicle deaths and injuries was \$476 million.
- About 80 percent of people killed in heavy vehicle crashes are other road users.

Heavy vehicles²⁰ are essential to our economy. Every year trucks carry approximately 70 percent of New Zealand’s freight²¹. Buses provide a range of services from taking children to school and commuters to work, to carrying tourists around the country.

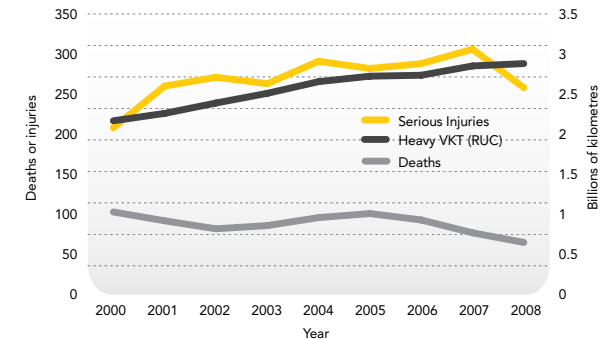
Heavy vehicles pose a particular challenge for road safety because the consequences of their crashes are more severe. Other road users generally come off second best in a crash with a heavy vehicle.

Since 2000, the distance travelled by heavy vehicles has increased but the number of deaths has dropped. However, serious injuries have increased (see Figure 13).

²⁰ Heavy vehicles are those motor vehicles with a gross vehicle mass over 3.5 tonnes. This includes buses.

²¹ On a tonnage per kilometre basis. National Freight Demands Study, September 2008, Ministry of Transport, Wellington.

Figure 13: Heavy vehicles – deaths and serious injuries



New Zealand’s heavy vehicle traffic is closely linked with economic growth. It tends to grow at a rate of approximately 1.5 times gross domestic product. Once the economy recovers from the recession, the distance travelled by heavy vehicle is expected to rise. An increase in heavy vehicles on our roads could mean an increase in serious crashes.

Heavy vehicle crashes also create significant delays on our roads. These delays create additional costs as the movement of people and freight is disrupted.

How can we improve the safety of heavy vehicles?

The suggested initiatives for improving the safety of heavy vehicles are to:

- Publish operators’ safety ratings
- Encourage the use of electronic stability control
- Assist companies to reduce work related road risk
- Adopt a ‘safe and fuel efficient’ driving programme

The initiatives suggested in the safer roads and safer speeds sections would also help reduce the impact of heavy vehicle crashes. However, there are actions we can take to improve the safety of heavy vehicles themselves.

Publish operators' safety ratings

Some heavy vehicle operators have better safety records than others. The Operator Safety Rating System (OSRS) will give heavy vehicle operators safety ratings based on their safety performance. These ratings will be available to potential customers and others with an interest in the industry, such as finance and insurance firms.

In this way the ratings will benefit heavy vehicle operators with good safety records as customers are more likely to choose their services. Poorer performing operators will have to improve safety in order to attract customers.

The ratings will also allow Police to focus on the most risky operators.

The OSRS is estimated to reduce the social costs of at-fault heavy vehicle crashes by about six percent per year (\$17 million) by 2021, so this indicates it is a very cost-effective initiative. We see implementation of the OSRS as the main initiative for improving heavy vehicle safety through to 2020.

Encourage the use of electronic stability control (ESC)

Vehicle instability is a serious risk for heavy vehicles. Drivers are often unaware of instability risks of their truck until it actually rolls. There are approximately 140 rollovers each year due to instability.

ESC acts on the braking, or power systems, of a vehicle to help the driver maintain control when it begins to skid or slide. ESC, as well as compliance with vehicle loading rules, improves stability.

We know ESC has prevented crashes, especially crashes where the driver has lost control. ESC could prevent

truck rollovers by 20 percent if fitted to vehicles that are at high risk. This represents a significant saving that will need to be compared to the implementation costs.

In Europe, ESC will start to become compulsory on vehicles from 2012. This requirement will be phased in over a number of years, with priority given to vehicles where the potential benefit is greatest, such as heavy truck/trailer combinations and touring coaches.

We could take a similar approach. However, due to the low number of heavy vehicles with this safety feature compared to light vehicles we would need to allow time for vehicles with ESC to be imported before we consider mandating. Promotional activities have been shown to be a cost-effective way of increasing the uptake of ESC in cars and a similar programme could be introduced for heavy vehicles.

Assist companies to reduce road risk

Getting into a vehicle is the most dangerous thing most New Zealanders will ever do while at work. Road deaths are the largest category of workplace deaths and road injuries make up 13 percent of workplace injuries. For this reason, the Workplace Health and Safety Strategy for New Zealand to 2015 lists workplace vehicles as one of its eight national priorities.

A new way of addressing this risk is the Commercial Driver Programme. This aims to raise commercial driver and company awareness of significant road safety issues like fatigue and speeding. Companies are informed when one of their vehicles receives a ticket for a road safety offence. This supports efforts to minimise risk and make the workplace safer for their staff. Prior to this programme, companies were not always aware of their employees' infringements, and it has received positive feedback.

We could implement the Commercial Driver Programme nationally. This could reduce work related road deaths and injuries while improving productivity.

Adopt a 'Safe and Fuel Efficient Driving' programme

Improving fuel efficiency is closely linked with improving road safety. Driving with a fuel efficient style gives drivers more time to identify hazards and reduce speeds.

The Ministry of Transport is developing a Safe and Fuel Efficient Driving programme which will provide a standard for fuel efficient driver training for the heavy commercial vehicle sector. It will promote safer driving techniques and more efficient use of fuel through defensive driving and vehicle maintenance.

This programme was a key recommendation from research undertaken by the Ministry in 2008. This research found that fleets that are willing and able to make the effort, and receive information and training, can improve fuel efficiency by 10 percent. Add to this any reduction in the number of heavy vehicle related crashes and the programme represents a sizeable cost saving to heavy vehicle operators.

DISCUSSION POINTS

Which of the suggested initiatives do you support and what is the most important one for you in increasing the safety of heavy vehicles?

Do you have other ideas for how we can increase the safety of heavy vehicles?



WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

- Over the period 2004 – 2008 fatigue contributed to 7 percent of serious injury crashes and 12 percent of fatal crashes. In 2008 alone fatigue related crashes resulted in 190 serious injuries and 42 deaths.
- It is estimated that the total social cost of crashes involving fatigue in 2008 was \$312.8 million.
- It is believed that fatigue causes far more road deaths and injuries than these statistics show.

People driving while they are tired, drowsy or sleepy is referred to as driver fatigue. Fatigue can affect a driver's reaction time, their ability to concentrate and their understanding of the road and traffic around them. The three main causes of fatigue are:

- insufficient sleep
- driving during times when we usually sleep
- long periods of work or activity without a break.

Crashes resulting from driver fatigue are among the most severe on the road. This is because a fatigued driver is less able to brake or avoid the impending crash. Severity and risk is increased further when fatigue is combined with speed, alcohol and drugs.

Our official statistics are based on Police reported crash data. At a crash scene it is difficult to determine, without an admission from a driver, whether fatigue has been a factor. However, research suggests that fatigue could be a contributing factor in up to a quarter of fatal crashes, which is much higher than the official statistics show.

Until recently, efforts to reduce driver fatigue have focused on commercial drivers. This is because it is easier to influence fatigue in the workplace than in private vehicle use.

The challenge is to make sure we invest our limited road safety resources into initiatives that are likely to influence the driving decisions of all New Zealanders. Some of the initiatives in the safer roads and roadsides section could also help to prevent fatigue related crashes, and/or lessen their impact (eg rumble strips, median barriers and sealed road shoulders).

HOW CAN WE REDUCE THE IMPACT OF FATIGUE?

The suggested initiatives for reducing the impact of fatigue are to:

- Increase the range of information
- Promote the use of roadside stopping places
- Make driving while fatigued an offence.

Increase the range of information

Drivers have a responsibility to avoid fatigue, but without providing the knowledge to help them meet that responsibility, we are unlikely to see any reduction in fatigue-related crashes.

We know there is widespread understanding that fatigue is a road safety issue, but people often do not recognise the signs of fatigue and when to stop driving.

We could address this through information that covers:

- how to recognise the signs of fatigue and how to deal with it (eg power napping and shared driving)
- driver fatigue stops and journey planning tools like maps showing cafes and rest areas.

This information would be targeted to high risk groups such as commercial drivers, shift workers, young people, and people driving on holidays.

There are many ways this information could be made available to the public with different levels of cost. An online journey planning tool could be created within existing budgets. However, if nationwide advertising is used then this cost could be significant.

Promote the use of roadside stopping places

Having a power nap (a short nap of 20 minutes) can help prevent and/or minimise the impact of fatigue. Experience from other jurisdictions suggests that a lack of safe and accessible stopping places prevents people from pulling over for a rest.

A key initiative in Victoria's (Australia) road safety strategy is to improve and expand the number of roadside stopping places. This is an initiative we could also consider.

Although we have a network of rest areas, their location, attractiveness, safety and signage may prevent drivers from using them. Alongside promoting regular breaks from driving, we could look at whether we have enough suitable rest areas.

Consider introducing an offence for 'driving while fatigued'

Some overseas jurisdictions have an offence for driving while fatigued. For example, in New Jersey, USA, drivers can be prosecuted if they have been awake for more than 24 consecutive hours before a crash causing death. Convicted drivers face up to 10 years imprisonment and/or up to a \$100,000 fine. In Finland, drivers who cause minor or non-injury crashes can also be prosecuted.

We could investigate making driving while fatigued an offence. This would be a long term initiative, and a number of steps would need to be taken in advance, such as giving the public more information. However, we would need to recognise that fatigue is part of everyday life.

Legislation would focus on the most extreme cases of fatigue, where drivers are driving in a way that is unacceptable and reliable evidence would be needed. The Police would need ways of identifying fatigue in drivers who are driving dangerously or have caused a crash.

There are several practical issues to be worked through before the likely effectiveness of this suggested initiative can be determined.

DISCUSSION POINTS

Which of the suggested initiatives do you support and what is the most important one for you in reducing the impact of fatigue?

Do you have other ideas for how we can reduce the impact of fatigue?



WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

- Over the period 2004 – 2008 distraction contributed to at least 10 percent of fatal crashes and 9 percent of serious injury crashes. In 2008, these crashes resulted in 243 serious injuries and 42 deaths.
- In 2008, it was estimated that the social cost of crashes involving distraction was \$411.5 million.
- It is believed that distraction contributes to far more crashes than official statistics show.

Driving safely requires a driver's full attention. A driver needs to maintain control of their vehicle and stay aware of the surroundings while looking out for and reacting to potential hazards. Distraction occurs when attention is diverted away from driving. Common distractions include passengers, cell phones and eating and drinking. Being upset or angry can also distract drivers.

Distraction is a serious road safety issue. It is often the initial event in a chain of events resulting in serious road trauma. Despite its seriousness we do not know the full extent of distraction's contribution to crashes. Crash statistics tend to under-report distraction. This is because drivers at a crash scene are often not willing to admit they were distracted and so it is difficult for a Police officer to identify whether distraction has contributed to a crash.

International research shows that distraction could be involved in around 20 percent of crashes.

Despite its seriousness, public understanding of distraction is low. Focus group research²² shows that many drivers do not see distraction as a road safety issue. People tend to view distraction as a normal part of driving. This is despite people also describing 'near-misses' and other situations where their driving had been affected by distraction.

There is concern that the number of distraction crashes may increase over 2010–2020. This is because the number and type of technologies that can distract drivers is increasing rapidly (eg MP3 players, navigation systems and entertainment systems).

The challenge in dealing with distraction is to put in place initiatives that will be both effective and offer value for money. Distractions are part of everyday life. Unlike alcohol or drug impaired driving, it is not possible to simply require all drivers not to be distracted at all times while driving.

There has been public consultation on the option of banning hand-held cell phone use while driving. The government has announced it will ban hand-held cell phone use while driving from 1 November 2009.

The cell phone ban was considered because research shows that using a mobile phone while driving increases the risk of being involved in a crash by up to four times. As well, the number of reported crashes involving the use of cell phones has more than doubled over the last six years.

As well as this initiative, some of the safer roads and roadsides initiatives suggested in this document will help to avoid distraction related crashes and/or lessen their impact (eg median barriers, rumble strips and sealed road shoulders).

²² Commissioned by Land Transport New Zealand in 2004.

WHAT ELSE COULD WE DO TO REDUCE THE NUMBER OF CRASHES CAUSED BY DISTRACTION?

The suggested initiative for addressing distraction is to:

- Raise public awareness and improve education

Raise public awareness and improve education

Many people are unaware of the risk of distraction and the ways they could reduce this risk (eg turning off their cell phone, choosing music while stopped and adjusting controls prior to the journey). Giving people this information could help them avoid driver distraction.

This information could also be incorporated into road safety education, particularly the road safety education provided to young people. Identifying and managing distraction could then be included in driver testing.

Road safety agencies already work with employers to encourage the uptake of safer vehicles and driving practices. We could expand this by including a focus on distraction. As well as reducing distraction while driving for work, it could help to improve personal driving habits.

DISCUSSION POINTS

Do you support the suggested initiative to reduce the impact of distraction?

Do you have other ideas for how we can reduce the impact of distraction?