

*Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents*  
**Managing Occupational Road Risk:  
The Next Steps....**

### **Background**

Last year (2001) the Government and the Health and Safety Commission (HSC) set up an independent Work Related Road Safety Task Group (WRRSTG) to promote a national debate around the proposition that employers should be addressing risks faced (and created) by their employees on the road as part of mainstream health and safety management. The WRRSTG published a discussion document and organised a consultation conference at the Barbican in London in April to seek responses to the idea that organisations should be taking positive action to promote the safety of their staff while at work on the road, whether as drivers, passengers or pedestrians. The Group, which was chaired by Richard Dykes, then a senior director in the Post Office (Consignia), took the view that occupational road risk is a major but still generally neglected issue. In part this is because the Health and Safety at Work (HSW) Act has not been enforced in this area because successive governments have regarded road safety law as being more appropriate to achieve safety objectives in this area. On the other hand it is clear that employers can do much both to enhance and reduce risks faced and created by their employees while at work on the road. There is a very strong 'business case' for action in this area which potentially can also make a significant contribution to meeting UK road safety targets.

The WRRSTG report has been published on web in November 2001 (see below). The Health and Safety Commission (HSC) are due to consider their response to the WRRSTG's recommendations at their meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> May.

### **RoSPA's Campaign**

RoSPA, which was represented on the WRRSTG, has been campaigning for the last six years for organisations to adopt a proactive risk management approach to reducing the risks connected with 'at work' vehicle use (see Annex one: Key Developments in the RoSPA MORR Initiative). Key points emphasised by RoSPA and others have included:

- Between 25 –30 per cent of the 3,500 fatalities occurring on Britain's roads annually are likely to be work related;
- It is likely therefore that more people are killed in 'at-work' road accidents than in all other kinds of occupational accidents;
- Car and van drivers who cover 25,000 miles a year as part of their job appear to be at about the same risk of being killed at work as workers in acknowledged high hazard sectors such as construction and quarrying (and company car drivers have nearly twice the accident liability of drivers in general);
- Employers have moral as well as legal duties to assess these risks and take 'reasonably practicable measures' to ensure 'safe systems of work' for their drivers but in many cases this does not happen because health and safety law is not applied on the road;
- Organisations which are already 'up-to-speed' on health and safety will have little difficulty in responding to the challenges posed by the report;

- The ‘business case’ for ‘at-work’ road safety suggests that, by taking action to promote the safety of their staff while driving, employers can reduce accident costs, make efficiency savings, improve their public image (a company’s drivers are its ambassadors on the road!) boost staff morale and enhance their overall health and safety culture;
- Enhanced action to tackle occupational road risk will make a significant contribution to meeting UK road safety targets and will mean that ‘everyone wins’ – including businesses, their workers, other road users and Society generally; and
- A variety of similar approaches to work related road safety are developing in other countries, including a number of EU Member States (France, in particular appears to have developed an innovative National Action Programme based on their National Insurance system for occupational accidents and diseases).

These arguments were first set out in detail in a RoSPA discussion document that was circulated to ‘key players’ in February 1996 to stimulate debate. Following a series of high level seminars in 1996/7, RoSPA published its own consensus guidance in March 1998 (‘Managing Occupational Road Risk’) with input from an expert reference group and funding and support from BT, Cornhill, Esso, Schlumberger, Royal Mail and Bayer. It contained messages of support from a wide range of influential figures including Government ministers and representatives of the EU, HSC, CBI, TUC, IOSH, ABI and ACPO.

RoSPA followed this up shortly afterwards by convening a ‘summit’ of key players at Bayer plc’s Stoke Court headquarters. It also undertook a series of ‘road shows’ around the country to raise awareness of the level of risk, harm and loss associated with ‘at work driving’. The Bayer event led to a consensus declaration endorsing RoSPA’s approach signed by: Allianz Cornhill Insurance, Association of British Insurers, Association of Car Fleet Operators, Association of Industrial Road Safety Officers, Bayer plc, BNFL, Brake, Confederation of British Industry, Devon County Council, Engineering Employers Federation, Fleet Driver Training Association, Institution of Occupational Safety and Health, Kellogg’s Co of GB, Local Authority Road Safety Officers’ Association, Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents, Trades Union Congress, University of Huddersfield, and the Zurich Insurance Company.

### **The Work-Related Road Safety Task Group (WRRSTG)**

In 2000, as part of the development of the Government’s national road safety strategy (‘Tomorrow’s roads: safer for everyone’), Lord Whitty (who was then minister responsible for both road safety and occupational health and safety) decided to set up the WRRSTG to initiate a national debate about addressing MORR as part of OH&S and to advise ministers.

The Task Group, whose Secretariat was ‘nested’ with HSE and which was independent of the HSC, drew its membership from a wide range of organisations including: CBI, TUC, RoSPA, BRAKE, Local Authorities, road safety bodies, the Police and a variety of Government departments and agencies. It received over 250 substantive replies to its discussion document which was launched on the HSE website in February 2001. These and the issues raised at the conference held at the Barbican in London on 5th April 2001, were discussed by an Evaluation sub-group who helped to prepare a draft report.

The Task Group looked closely at a wide variety of issues including:

- the precise number of WR road casualties; their causes, severities, costs, and ‘preventability’;
- whether injuries in work related road accidents should be reportable under the Reporting of Injuries Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR) and covered by the police in the Stats 19 form completed at the scene of road crashes;
- how to ensure effective integration of road safety and OS&H law and the balance of employer versus driver responsibilities;
- whether and how employers’ duties of care extended to normal (as opposed to abnormal) commuting and the safety of the kerbside workforce
- whether there was a case for introducing an occupational driving licence (which was rejected in favour of recommending that employers assess competence – as in other areas of H&S)
- whether there were opportunities for integration with the commercial transport regime;
- if and how effective enforcement liaison could be developed between the HSE and/or police; and
- whether there was a case for production of an Approved Code of Practice (ACoP) (rejected in favour of HSE guidance because not enough was known to provide the degree of authority required to ensure ACoP advice had robust, evidential status in proceedings).

WRRSTG engaged consultants, the Business Strategy Group, to review data on the number of work related road casualties. While available data were sparse, work by BSG confirmed RoSPA’s casualty estimates as broadly correct but WRRSTG has suggested that HSE commission further research to discover the precise extent and nature of the work related road accidents and injuries. The Task Group’s deliberations also included special risk groups such as occupational motorcyclists.

### **The WRRSTG Report**

The WRRSTG’s report was published on the web in November 2001 ([www.hse.gov.uk/road/content/traffic1.pdf](http://www.hse.gov.uk/road/content/traffic1.pdf)). In summary the recommendations of WRRSTG are that:

- employers should manage risk on the road as part of H&S;
- HSE should prepare guidance for employers (plus simple case studies for small firms);
- there should be a major campaign to raise awareness over the next 2 years;
- there should be revisions to STATS 19 and RIDDOR;
- work should be undertaken to develop effective HSE and Police enforcement liaison; HSE should pursue further research (into the prevalence, causation, costs and preventability of work related road accidents);
- there should be a follow up body to WRRSTG; and
- more resources for HSE to enable them to take the issue forward.

The clear consensus however was that, in the coming period, the priority was to focus on awareness raising as well as on incentivisation (particularly via insurance). New

diagnostic tools and services were needed. Research and development was needed into practical issues such as performance monitoring options, data management, integrating WRRS into training and disseminating best practice. There was also a need to recognise achievement and to promote worldwide learning.

### **RoSPA input to the debate**

Throughout the WRRSTG exercise RoSPA has sought to make a major input to the debate, including making a presentation at the Barbican conference. Some of the key themes on which RoSPA has focused include:

- the scale of risk, harm and loss associated with ‘at work’ road accidents;
- how to motivate employers to address MORR, including how to communicate the ‘business case’ (including ethical and reputational considerations) and how to enforce relevant law;
- communicating health and safety management ‘system’ concepts to fleet and road safety professionals (rather than focusing purely on specific control measures e.g. driver training);
- ensuring effective employee involvement, for example by consulting appointed safety representatives and reviewing road safety performance in health and safety committees;
- the need to avoid prescription and blanket ‘one size fits all’ approaches, ensuring the tone of guidance is ‘goal setting/assessment’ based, helping organisations to develop an assessment approach to achieve proportionality;
- from this point of view, while accepting that, in practice, driver training is an important control measure, avoiding the impression that henceforth every at-work driver should get such training, regardless of risk exposure or development need;
- similarly, avoiding unnecessary burdens on small firms and helping them by providing practical advice and case studies;
- the need to stress that effective performance monitoring and data management are fundamental to MORR (no monitoring, no management!);
- using understandings about health and safety culture in the OS&H field to promote ‘occupational road safety culture’ (both as a determinant of manager and driver behaviour and as a general ‘health and safety culture builder’; and
- getting a fair balance of responsibility between employers, managers and employees who are required to drive or work on the road as part of their job, accepting that responsibilities are shared but that employers must establish safe systems of driving for work with senior management leadership by words and deeds (including senior managers’ own driving behaviour!).

Throughout RoSPA has argued strongly that, while employers cannot be expected to prevent all work related road crashes, they can take reasonable steps to make them less likely and/or to reduce their consequences. Thus, the focus will need to be on assessing where ‘at work’ road safety problems are likely to be most frequent or

serious and tracking key indicators so that employers and employee representatives can develop action plans and apply cost effective solutions.

The WRRSTG discussion exercise threw up a lot of practical information, for example on the full range of control measures available. There is clearly concern about issues such as unsafe scheduling leading to inappropriate use of speed and the contribution of fatigue to accident 'at work' road accident causation. There may also be a need to look at health issues, not only the safety impact on driving of health impairments but also ill health caused or made worse by driving such as stress, low back pain, especially in high mileage car drivers etc. (linking with the HSC's '*Securing Health Together*' strategy).

Also near the top of the agenda is the debate about how to establish more effective enforcement liaison arrangements between the police, the vehicle inspectorate and health and safety enforcers such as HSE and local authorities. RoSPA would like to see HSE extending its inspection of employers' site transport arrangements to look at their systems and standards for controlling risk on the road. While the police will remain in the lead in investigating road traffic accidents, where it appears that employers have failed to create a safe system of driving (excessive hours, incentives to speed, required use of mobile phones on the move etc) they should be investigated further by HSE and, where appropriate, prosecuted.

### **The need to develop a risk management approach**

Employers clearly have moral as well as legal duties to assess the 'at work' road risks and take 'reasonably practicable measures' to ensure 'safe systems of work' for their drivers. Many practical and cost effective control measures can be put in place, for example:

- getting risks down 'at source', e.g. by exploring safer alternatives to travel by road;
- specification of safest routes;
- setting standards for safe schedules, journey times and distance limits;
- specification of safer vehicles with additional safety features;
- ensuring safe maintenance; and
- ensuring drivers are fit and having suitable driver selection, assessment and driver development arrangements in place to help them to cope with the risks on the road.

What RoSPA has been arguing however is that 'at work' road safety is not just a question of introducing specific control measures like driver training (important as these are). The primary focus must be on ensuring that organisations have a systematic risk management capability, adapting the 'systems approach' to health and safety management advocated by HSE and the British Standards Institution in guidance documents such as HSG65 and BS 8800.

In other words, organisations will not be able to achieve a cycle of continuous improvement in their road safety performance unless they have:

- established and communicated clear road safety policies and objectives;
- specified the responsibilities and competences required to achieve them at every level;
- put in place a planned approach to risk control informed by risk assessment, standards and targets;

- developed arrangements to monitor their road safety performance (actively and reactively by investigating incidents); and
- established a system for feeding back lessons from periodic performance reviews.

In short, managing risk on the road, like managing any kind of work related risk, cannot be achieved by one-off interventions. Organisations need to focus, in the first instance, on the policies, people and procedures (or ‘system’) which they need to have in place and establish the ‘process’ for working the problem before trying to find ‘solutions’. Two key ingredients for success are clear, visible and committed leadership by senior managers (exemplified in their decision making and in their personal behaviour) and full and effective workforce involvement (including full partnership and consultation with safety representatives). They also need good sources of data (for example on vehicles, journeys drivers and crashes/incidents) to help them assess risks and monitor the effectiveness of interventions.

### **Establishing HSC/E’s role**

RoSPA accepts however that, in the longer term, it will be difficult for HSC/E to take on all the additional work flowing from the WRRSTG report without additional resources. As part of their programme for ‘*Revitalising Health and Safety*’ (RHS), the HSC are already committed to developing priority programmes (decided following extensive public consultation) to tackle site transport accidents, falls from height and on the level, stress and musculo-skeletal disorders. They are also focusing effort on improving H&S performance in agriculture, construction and the NHS.

On the other hand, if HSC/E are to assume a leading role in work related road safety, the question inevitably arises as to where this issue should sit alongside these other priorities. HSC/E efforts to promote and enforce health and safety at work in fixed workplaces (where employees are under direct managerial supervision) need to be balanced with new initiatives designed to meet the needs of millions of workers who are engaged either wholly or partially in peripatetic work – much of which involves using vehicles as part of their job.

Several arguments need to be borne in mind here;

- The RHS priorities were set before the WRRSTG had been established and thus much bigger issue of work related road safety was then still not ‘on the HSC/E radar screen’.
- The 2004 review point for assessing progress towards the HSC/E’s RHS targets also coincides with a similar suggested review date in the WRRSTG report. At that point it might be reasonable to see how work-related road safety could be taken into the HSC’s revised priorities and also linked with the current priority on workplace transport safety.
- Were HSC to fail to commit to actioning the WRRSTG’s recommendations, it is likely that this could result in further public pressure, Parliamentary Questions as well possibly as judicial review of cases in which HSE had decided not to investigate particular work related road accidents.

- The issue is one that clearly demands ‘joined-up Government’, particularly given the contribution which greater employer action can make to help achieve national road casualty reduction targets (*Tomorrow’s Roads: safer for everyone*: 40 per cent reduction in numbers killed and seriously injured by 2010). (In this context the targets in TR and RHS need to be viewed in parallel.)
- A wide range of activities to promote occupational road safety are being undertaken in other countries (including in the EU) and exploratory discussions are taking place within the European Commission on this subject - suggesting that the UK should have a clearly developed policy line to advance in any subsequent discussions with other Member States.

### **Making MORR happen!**

On 29<sup>th</sup> April, as part of a ‘core group’, RoSPA helped to convene a meeting of some 40 organisations in road and occupational safety at the Bayer Conference Centre at Stoke Court, near Slough. Discussion focussed on the case for setting up an ‘Occupational Road Safety Alliance’ (ORSA) involving bodies such as: road safety bodies; motoring organisations; employer organisations; trades unions; professional institutions; insurers; Local Authorities; the driver development sector; the fleet sector; major corporates and others who can help promote and support MORR. (A Steering Group has been set up and discussions are to be held to develop a programme of work focusing primarily on:

- making a common public commitment to a set of shared goals (with possibly a common logo/ slogan);
- developing a co-ordinated approach to awareness raising and information exchange, for example via a website with hotlinks to information on ORSA members’ sites);
- sharing perspectives and plans;
- organising conferences and seminars; and
- promoting technical co-operation and development.

The ORSA hopes that, while HSE will be able to produce guidance to set work related road safety in context of H&S law, the ‘Alliance’ will be able to take on the role of awareness raising, leaving the Executive and other agencies free to concentrate on longer term tasks such as commissioning research and establishing effective enforcement liaison. This will allow HSC/E time to get to grips with some of the more challenging between aspects of the WRRSTG report (and thereby demonstrate the precise extent of additional resource requirements to the Treasury).

### **On-Going Work**

As part of its participation in ORSA, RoSPA will be continuing to develop its MORR services. It will be continuing to run its course on MORR which is aimed at health and safety professionals and fleet/vehicle managers and is based around the RoSPA MORR guidance. RoSPA is also a major provider of driver services, including defensive driver training. Besides continuing to market these services and its MORR package (see Annex two ‘The RoSPA Occupational Road Risk Product/ Service Suite’), RoSPA is working to develop additional tools and guidance including an ‘Initial Status Review’ tool (to help organisations to answer the questions ‘Where are we now’ and ‘Where

do we want to be?. It has also recently published three supplementary web-based 'ten point' codes on 'speed' (indicating the approach organisations should adopt to prevent inappropriate use of speed by its drivers); 'fatigue' (preventing falling asleep at the wheel); and 'driver competence' (indicating the approach which they should adopt for driver assessment and development). RoSPA is presently reviewing evidence from companies on the impact of their interventions on crash rates. It is also undertaking an international comparisons review, looking at action on MORR for example, in France, the USA and Australia. Other possible activities include seminars and a 'partnership' project on MORR in the Electricity sector to show how employer union co-operation can help to tackle at-work road safety issues and promote a safe driving culture.

**Roger Bibbings,  
Occupational Safety Adviser,  
RoSPA, Edgbaston Park, 353, Bristol Road, Birmingham B5 7ST  
Tel 0121 248 2095 Fax 0121 248 2001  
Email [rbibbings@rospa.co.uk](mailto:rbibbings@rospa.co.uk)**

**1<sup>st</sup> May 2002**