

Calendar of events affecting road safety and traffic

1903-1904: Motor Car Act introduced driving licences. Vehicle braking requirements are introduced for the first time.

1927: First automatic traffic light signals installed.

1930: Speed limit of 20 mph is abolished for cars and cycles. PSVs are limited to 30 mph and maximum working hours for PSV and goods vehicle drivers are introduced. Testing for some driving licences is made compulsory. Third party insurance cover becomes necessary. Minimum driving age set.

1931: Highway Code first issued.

1934-1935: In built-up areas a speed limit of 30 mph is made compulsory. HGV licences are introduced. The first pedestrian crossings appear. Regulations concerning vehicle safety glass and windscreen wipers are introduced. Invention of "cats eyes" reflecting road studs. Compulsory driving tests introduced as part of the Road Traffic Act. "L" plates introduced.

1939-1945: Signposts removed during wartime. Driving tests are suspended with examiners designated as Traffic Officers, supervising fuel rationing.

1946-1948: Wartime lighting restrictions are relaxed and driving tests restored in 1946. Petrol allowance of 180 miles per month is permitted.

1949-1954: New anti-dazzle regulations are introduced. Legislation concerning new lighting and school crossing patrols are introduced. Flashing indicators on motor vehicles are legalised. Brakes on pedal cycles are made compulsory. Introduction of zebra crossings. New Highway Code features first colour illustrations.

1955-1957: Regulations concerning parking without lights in London are introduced. The maximum length allowed for vehicles is increased. Holders of lapsed licences issued over 10 years previously must retake driving test to obtain a new licence. Penalties for drinking and driving are extended to pedal cyclists. Fuel shortages resulting from the Suez crisis in 1956 decrease motor traffic; driving tests are suspended during the crisis. First motorway opened.

1959-1960: Motorway regulations, new vehicle lighting regulations and double white lines are introduced. Speed limit of 40 mph introduced for some roads. Learner motorcyclists are restricted to riding machines of under 250 cc. Annual testing of 10 year old cars and LGVs is introduced. Introduction of parking meters on London streets. Yellow lines denoting waiting restrictions introduced. Stanmore examiner training school opened.

1961-1963: Testing of all vehicles of 30 cwt and under and more than 7 years old is made compulsory. A valid test certificate is required to obtain a vehicle licence. Free copies of the Highway Code are circulated. TV car safety campaign You Know It Makes Sense launched, encouraging use of seatbelts. Motorcyclists permitted to ride bikes over 250cc (after passing their test) under the Road Traffic Act 1962.

1964-1965: Introduction of trial speed limit of 70 mph on motorways and other previously derestricted roads. First "Drink and Drive" publicity campaign.

1966-1967: Seat belt fitting is made compulsory for new cars. It becomes an offence to drive with over 80mg of alcohol per 100ml of blood. Breath tests introduced. Permanent maximum speed limit of 70 mph introduced for previously unrestricted roads. HGVs banned from the outside lane of motorways.

1968-1969: Introduction of plating and testing of goods vehicles and voluntary HGV driving tests - Regulations on drivers' working hours are introduced. Test certificate now required for cars more than 3 years old. Pelican crossings are introduced. First UK bus lane introduced in Park Lane, London.

1970-1972: HGV driving test and registration of driving instructors becomes compulsory. 16 year olds are limited to riding mopeds only. Rear markings and long vehicle signs are made compulsory for HGVs. Zig Zag markings introduced at zebra crossings. Child seatbelt TV campaign Your Seatbelt is their Security is launched in 1970. The following year sees the introduction of the Clunk Click Every Trip seatbelt campaign. The Green Cross Code is launched to promote child pedestrian safety, aimed specifically at children themselves.

1973-1974: Safety helmets are made compulsory for two-wheeled motor vehicle users. Energy crisis leads to petrol shortages and large fuel price increases and to temporary 50 mph national maximum speed limit.

1975-1976: Vehicles now required to be lit when daylight visibility is seriously reduced. Minimum age of trainee HGV drivers reduced to 18.

1977: Mopeds redefined to 30 mph maximum design speed. MOT test widened to include windscreen wipers and washers and exhaust systems. 1977 Christmas drink drive campaign slogan Think before you drink before you drive is used by the Brewers and Licensed Retailers Association in later education campaigns.

1978: 60 and 70 mph speed limits are made permanent. New rules on the maximum number of hours that may be worked by goods vehicle drivers are introduced. High intensity rear fog lamps become a mandatory fitment to most vehicles manufactured after 1 October 1979 and used from 1 April 1980.

1979: Regulations are introduced to help prevent lorries hitting overhead bridges. Code of practice issued on vehicle safety defects (arrangements for recall on new vehicles found to be defective). Use of tachograph accepted by Government. Start of long-term drink/driving tracking research.

1980-1981: Reform of bus licensing and removal of advertising restrictions from private car sharing schemes. Reduction in minimum driving age of invalid car drivers to 16.

1982: Two part motorcycle test introduced. Provisional motorcycle licences restricted to two years. Recall code announced for manufacturers to recall potentially defective motorcycles. Tougher written examination for entrants to driving instructor registration scheme.

1983: Seat belt wearing becomes law for drivers and front seat passengers. Learner motorcyclists now only allowed to ride machines of up to 125 cc. First road hump regulations made.

1984: Stiffer driving tests for entrants of driving instructor registration scheme. Tougher internal checks on tuition given by qualified driving instructors. New pedal cycles are required to meet British Standards. Revised Code of Practice on safety of loads on vehicles is issued. Spray reducing devices required to be fitted to lorries and trailers.

1985: Both load and speed performance to be marked on new car tyres. Regulations allowing the use of traffic cones, warning lamps, and triangles in the event of breakdowns come into force. PSV driving tests made compulsory.

1986: Uniform construction standards to apply to minibuses first used from April 1988. Tyres are now required to support maximum axle weights at a vehicle's maximum speed. Seat belt legislation is made permanent. White on brown signs to tourist attractions introduced. European Road Safety Year.

1987: The Secretary of State for Transport sets a target to achieve a one third reduction in road accident casualties by the year 2000. All newly registered cars to be fitted with rear seat belts or child restraints. Use of amber flashing lights on slow moving vehicles is made compulsory. Zig-zag markings extended to Pelican crossings. Closure of 586 emergency crossing points on central reservations of motorways.

1988: Close proximity and wide angle rear view mirrors become a legal requirement on new HGVs. All new cars first used from 1 April must be able to use unleaded petrol. All coaches first used from 1 April 1974 must have 70 mph limiters fitted by 1 April 1992. Driving tests hereafter conducted under the provisions of the Road Traffic Act 1988.

1989: Penalty points increased for careless driving, driving without insurance, and failing to stop after or to report an accident. Accompanied motorcycle testing becomes mandatory. Seat belt wearing by rear child passengers becomes law in cars where appropriate restraints have been fitted and are available. The Booth Report published, assessing motorcycle accidents in the Metropolitan Police area. Motorcycle test revised to include radio contact and accompaniment by examiner.

1990: Compulsory basic training for motorcyclists introduced. Learner motorcyclists banned from carrying pillion passengers. New road hump regulations. High Risk Offenders Scheme for problem drink-drivers extended; introduction of charges for medical examination required before return of licence. New regulations require those accompanying learner drivers to be at least 21 years old and to have held a licence for 3 years. Experimental Red Routes introduced in London.

1991: First 20mph zones introduced. Chevron markings introduced on the M1 to help drivers keep a safe distance from the vehicle in front. First trials of nearside pedestrian signal at junctions. First edition of Car and Driver: Injury Accident and Casualty Rates published giving information on comparative accident involvement and injury risks of popular makes and models of car. Seat belt wearing by rear adult passengers becomes law in cars where belts are fitted and available.

1992: Requirement for a minimum tread depth of 1.6mm introduced for cars and light vans. Traffic Calming Act 1992 receives Royal Assent. Launch of road safety campaign Kill Your Speed, Not A Child. Government issues Killing Speed and Saving Lives consultation paper. Safety helmets made compulsory for child horse riders. Speed enforcement cameras and retesting of dangerous drivers introduced. All new goods vehicles over 7.5 tonnes fitted with 60 mph speed limiters. New emission requirements made 3-way catalytic converters necessary on virtually all new petrol-engined cars.

1993: Experimental scheme begins in the use of rehabilitation courses for drink/drive offenders. MOT test for cars extended to include checks on mirrors, fuel tanks and pipes, body security, seat and door security, additional lighting items, number plates and windscreen condition. Consolidation of seat belt wearing regulations. Bus Advance Areas introduced. Traffic Calming Regulations enable highway authorities to introduce a wider range of traffic calming features.

1994: Publication of Safer by Design brochure produced for local councils to encourage traffic calming. London Boroughs take over most parking enforcement in the capital. 100th speed camera site established and 100th 20mph speed limit zone opened. Launch of Elephant rear seat belt and Kill Your Speed TV publicity campaigns. Major revision of traffic signs regulations introducing modified system of colour coded direction signs, simplification of yellow line system of waiting restrictions and a range of new warning and regulatory signs. Speed limiter settings lowered to 65 mph for new buses and coaches and to 56 mph for HGVs.

1995: Publication of Road Safety Report 1995. Pass Plus scheme introduced for new drivers, which encourages new drivers to take more lessons by offering discount on motor insurance. New edition of the Highway Code for young road users. Speed campaign Don't Look Now incorporates radio commercials for the first time. New edition of Choosing Safety booklet published, giving advice on car safety and security features.

1996: Driving theory test introduced for car and motorcycle learners (1 July). Latest Kill Your Speed campaign focuses on children killed near their homes using emotive music, poetry and relatives voices. Child Pedestrian Safety in the UK published. Publication of advice booklets on the forthcoming requirement for seat belts in minibuses and coaches carrying children. Publication of consultation document Targeting the Future which sets out options for post 2000 casualty targets.

1997: New Zebra, Pelican and Puffin crossing regulations introduced. Road Traffic (New Drivers) Act 1995 comes into force; withdrawal of licence and compulsory retesting for new drivers who accumulate 6 or more penalty points within 2 years of passing their driving test. Written theory test introduced for LGV and PCV drivers.

1998: Transport white paper A New Deal for Transport: Better for Everyone published, promoting public transport and safer, more secure transport systems. Drink-drive rehabilitation experiment expanded to cover around one-third of courts in Great Britain and extended for 2 years to the end of 1999. Publication of Combating Drink-drive: Next Steps consultation paper.

1999: Kill your Speed campaign launched (six weeks: £3.5m). GLA Road Network announced (220 miles of trunk roads and 105 miles of borough roads). Cycle Smart

campaign for child cyclists launched. First BBC simulcast commercial for £2.6m Millennium Drink-Drive campaign. Changes to practical driving test introduced.

2000: The government announced a new road safety strategy and casualty reduction targets for the year 2010 in Tomorrows Roads - Safer for Everyone. A review of speed policy was conducted and reported in New Directions in Speed Management. £1.4bn targeted programme of improvements announced in A New Deal for Trunk Roads in England following the Roads Review. National Cycle Network officially opened. Think! road safety campaign launched. Eight pilot areas to recover costs of operating speed and red light cameras (safety cameras) from fines resulting from enforcement.

2001: The government announced a £10 million pilot of road safety schemes for children in deprived areas. Road Safety Good Practice Guidance published. First national campaign launched for fitting child car seats correctly. "Hedgehogs" road safety website launched for children. Legislation introduced that extends the cost recovery system piloted in 2000 to all areas. A national safety camera programme is gradually introduced.

2002: The government seeks views on banning mobile phones whilst driving. £6 million was made available to improve road safety in most deprived cities. A new motorcycle safety campaign is launched, as is a campaign urging parents to check their child's car seat every trip. Dangerous driving and the Law report published.

2003: The phased introduction of the hazard perception test into the theory test was completed. As of 1 December the new offence of using a hand held mobile phone while driving is introduced. Seatbelt campaign THINK! Wear a seatbelt....You don't get a second chance features an online interactive crash simulator. Radio drink driving campaign timed to coincide with early morning pub opening during Rugby Union World Cup. Congestion Charging introduced in London.

2004: The first three year review of the Government's road safety strategy published. The World Health Organisation dedicated World Health Day to the issue of road safety. The United Nations issued a resolution on global road safety.

2005: Roads Policing Strategy published jointly by Dept for Transport, Home Office and Association of Chief Police Officers. Publication of Government's Motorcycling Strategy, recognising motorcycling as a "mainstream" mode of transport. Distractions campaign, aimed at teenage pedestrians, features Camera Phone, first TV commercial shot entirely on a mobile video phone. The police are given the power to seize uninsured vehicles being driven on the road - those which are not reclaimed may be sold off or crushed.

2006: Road Safety Act passed. The act made provision for a wide range of road safety matters including: drink driving, speeding, driver training, driver and vehicle licensing.

2007: New THINK! drink-drive advert launched, emphasising the consequences of a drinkdrive conviction. New crash helmet safety rating scheme announced: 'SHARP' - Safety Helmet Assessment and Rating Programme giving an independent rating (from 1 to 5 stars) of how much protection a helmet can provide in an impact. The cost recovery system for safety cameras ends. From 1 April cameras to be funded like other safety measures through the Local Transport Plan process.

2008: Learning to Drive consultation, reforming car driver training and testing, published. Driver Certificate of Professional Competence (DCPC) was introduced for bus and coach drivers.

2009: The Department evaluated the safety performance of motorcycle helmets and published ratings under the Safety Helmet Assessment and Rating Programme (SHARP). First national THINK! campaign about drug driving launched. The department introduced Road Casualties Online to its website, a web based tool which allows members of the public to perform their own analysis and examination of Reported Road Accident Statistics. The two part, modular motorcycle test was introduced. Driver Certificate of Professional Competence (DCPC) was introduced for lorries.

2010: Government-commissioned independent North Review of drink and drug driving published. Specific funding for safety cameras abolished and local safety funding mainstreamed. Significant changes to practical car tests with 'independent driving' introduced. Driver Certificate of Professional Competence (DCPC) was introduced for lorry drivers. National Driver and Rider Standards published.

2011: The Strategic Framework for Road Safety was published, setting out the Government's approach to continuing to reduce killed and seriously injured casualties on Britain's roads. Continuous Insurance Enforcement (CIE) scheme introduced making it an offence to keep any vehicle which has no valid insurance unless a valid Statutory Off Road Notification (SORN) declaration has been made to the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Authority (DVLA). National Driver and Rider Training Standards published.

2013: In January 2013 the Department published revised guidance to local authorities on setting local speed limits. This revision will help local authorities implement more consistent speed limits on local roads and incorporates recent changes that create more flexibility for authorities to implement 20mph limits and zones.

Changes giving the police powers to issue fixed penalty notices for careless or inconsiderate driving have come into effect on 16 August 2013. Careless drivers who put other road users at risk by committing offences such as tailgating or poor lane discipline will face on-the-spot penalties. Existing fixed penalty levels for most motoring offences - including using a mobile phone at the wheel and not wearing a seatbelt - rise to £100, bringing them into line with penalties for similar non-motoring fixed penalties.