

Over the last three weeks (April 12, 19, and 26, 2012), I have been discussing aspects of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Inland Transport Committee 2010 report called Consolidated Resolution on Road Traffic by the Working Party on Road Traffic Safety. This month May 2012 will mark one year since the launch of United Nations Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020. Today I examine driver training and instruction.

The purposes of a driving test are: to ensure that new drivers have reached a certain minimum standard of training, and to set the standard to which instructors should aim. In 1996, the Driving Instructors Association indicated that since the 1970s the requirement for possessing a Professional Driving Instructors Permit was removed, and all that is required to be a driving instructor is three (3) years of having a driver's license. Further, anyone could enter the Transport Division and "tout" potential driving students for training, as there is no administrative structure for training and monitoring the quality of driving instructors. And there are no guidelines or conditions governing the technical or other capabilities of driving instructors. Therefore, we do not have a foolproof approach to determining the quality assurance of the product – the safe driver. In addition, there is currently no night-time driver training, yet many if not most accidents occur at nights.

The report recommends both theoretical classroom training as well as practical (road) training.

Classroom Training

According to the report, *"teaching aids shall be so conceived that they present visually the traffic situation discussed. Books, drawings and pictures, or audio-visual equipment (films or slides) shall, as far as*

possible, present situations as seen from the driver's seat of a vehicle.

They shall be made in cooperation with educational experts, use modern teaching principles and illustrate facts drawn from national and international road traffic research and what is known about circumstances surrounding accidents. Use may be made of updated technical teaching aids such as simulators or specific computer programs as a complement to the existing methods of tuition."

It recommends that instructions should include the following:

- Knowledge of legislation, rules and regulations relating to the use of vehicles, traffic signs, signals and markings, and of their meaning;
- Basic knowledge and understanding of the technical regulations relating to vehicle safety in traffic, in particular the use of equipment designed to improve the safety of vehicles in traffic;
- Adequate knowledge and understanding of the importance of road safety matters, and especially of the following accident factors:
 - (a) Road traffic dangers, such as danger in overtaking manoeuvres, wrong estimate of speed and distance (effects on braking and safety distances), influence of the quality of the road surface, the time of day, the weather (rain, side wind, aquaplaning), actions of other road users, and in particular of elderly people and children;
 - (b) Factors likely to reduce the driver's vigilance and his physical and mental fitness, such as fatigue, illness, alcohol, drugs and medication, etc;
 - (c) Safety factors relating to the stowage of loads and to the occupants of vehicles;
 - (d) Knowledge of action which may be required to assist passengers in case of a road traffic accident or physical indisposition and of

arrangements for evacuation of passengers in emergency

Practical (Road) Training

- The tuition shall be carried out on roads of all types and in both daytime and night conditions wherever possible, so that the pupil shall have experience in meeting the various hazards he is likely to encounter when driving.
- On highways, however, driving lessons shall be given only to learner drivers who, in the opinion of their instructor, have already gained adequate experience of driving on ordinary roads. Such lessons may be prohibited during periods of heavy traffic on the motorway in question.

General

The report recommends that instructions should include the following:

- Exercises related to the negotiation of intersections: approaching; crossing; turning right; turning left; negotiating with good visibility; negotiating with poor visibility; and negotiating roundabouts.
- Driving in heavy traffic: adaptation of speed, keeping sufficient safety distance between vehicles in relation to: traffic ahead; traffic at the rear; overtaking manoeuvre of another vehicle; lane discipline.
- Driving on highways: Entering, use of the acceleration lane; Maintaining the safety distance from other vehicles; Lane changing; Overtaking and re-positioning; Driving into and out of lay-bys; Leaving, use of deceleration lane.
- Driving at night or in inclement weather conditions: use of lights in general; use of passing lights; and, adaptation of speed to the range of vision and to the conditions of the road surface.

For our local situation, special attention should be given to the

significance of alcohol, drugs, behaviour, and distractions as primary causes of motor vehicle crashes. The training is an accident prevention effort not an accident prediction effort.

There should be training and performance monitoring of our local licensed testing officers and driving instructors. Certification courses would include instructional content, methods and procedures, as well as organization and administration of driver instruction.

We also need to develop a formal certified road safety course at the primary and secondary school teacher training institutions. Experts may be invited to develop programmes for training teachers to introduce road safety education into the school curriculum so as to create appropriate inculcated behaviour at a young age. Education is long-term and concerned with the imparting of information and the development of acceptable attitudes. This contrasts with training, which is short-term and concerned with acquiring skills and the development of practical road sense.

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