

Safe Driving Policy

Preventing Driver Initiated Distractions

Issued by: VAG

Issue date: May 2019

Reviewed: TBC

Version: 1

Introduction

Driving a motor vehicle, including plant equipment, is a complex and demanding activity in which the potential for causing serious consequence, injury or death is greatly increased when a driver is distracted from concentrating solely on driving safely. Distractions may be non-driver initiated, e.g. where a driver focusses (wrongly) on someone else's traffic accident ("rubbernecking") but they are, in many cases, driver initiated distractions, e.g. where the driver smokes/vapes, eats, operates in-vehicle equipment or mobile communication whilst driving.

The Council has a duty to ensure its employees drive safely and are not distracted through driver initiated activities which can be foreseen and therefore prevented. This extends to include agency, casual and volunteer staff who are driving/operating equipment on behalf of the Council. In simple terms, a driver is distracted whenever they give attention to any secondary (non-driving) activity whilst driving. The more complex the secondary activity the more distracted the driver will be and therefore the greater the potential for them to cause or be involved in a road traffic collision.

A driver may be stopped for any number of reasons and where found to be distracted could be charged with a range of offences, including: dangerous driving, careless and inconsiderate driving, failure to be in proper control of the vehicle, driving without due care and attention etc. If the offence involved a fatality then the employer could also be prosecuted, e.g. for corporate manslaughter, and other sanctions may also be used against an employer, e.g. suspension or revocation of their Operator's Licence if the driver was driving a LGV/PSV vehicle.

Employers are legally required to ensure the safety of their driver/employee, and other road users, by putting in place 'reasonably practicable' safety measures to prevent this. These include the provision of formal risk assessments and training for work related journeys, and the prevention of driver initiated secondary activities would form part of such.

Distracted driving is the diversion of attention from driving, as a result of the driver focusing on or interacting with a non-driving object, activity, event, or person. This diversion reduces cognitive awareness, decision-making, or performance leading to increased risk of driver-error, near-miss accidents, or accidents. Examples of driver initiated distractions include, but are not limited to:

- Use of communication/technologies such as mob phones, IT etc.
- Smoking/Vaping, eating and drinking
- Use of non-essential vehicle controls such as sat nav or external facing camera systems
- Playing loud music / wearing of headphones
- Reading / writing / personal grooming
- Reaching / leaning over (away from normal driving position)

In-Vehicle Technologies

The advances in in-vehicle technology have been huge and are on-going. The technology can be helpful and beneficial but it can also be distracting and it is therefore Council policy that drivers are not to use / operate any non-driving related technology (e.g. hand held

mobile phones, computerised systems, CD players etc.) whilst driving. If there is a need to respond to technology, or any non-driving distraction, the driver is required to find a safe place to stop, switch off the engine and apply the parking brake before doing so.

Safe Driving Policy - Preventing Driver Initiated Distractions

This policy applies to all Company employees who drive as part of their employment. It has been implemented to:

- Protect the health and safety of Council employees and agency workers, by prohibiting or restricting them from undertaking activities that distract their focus from driving responsibilities while operating any motor vehicle in the course of their work.
- Reduce the incidence of driver distractions and to ensure the safety of our employees and others (passengers, other motorists and pedestrians)
- Comply with legal requirements
- Reduce operational and financial risks
- Strengthen the reputation of the Council

Staff Who Drive at Work Must:

1. Not initiate or engage in any secondary activity whilst driving.
2. Ensure hand held mobile phones are switched off or turned to silent to ensure the receipt of messages or calls do not present a distraction.
3. Plan journeys to include rest stops when messages may be checked and calls returned.
4. Comply with this policy whether they are driving a company vehicle, their own car (grey fleet) or a hire vehicle.

Note: An employee stopped or observed to be driving whilst distracted may be convicted of a driving offence and may be subject to Council formal procedures.

Line Managers of Vehicle Drivers Must Ensure:

1. They are aware of this policy and the dangers of distraction.
2. They are trained in the safe use of all in-vehicle technologies which may cause a distraction.
3. Work practices do not pressurise staff to use in vehicle communication or technology whilst driving.
4. That staff plan journeys to include rest stops which provide a safe opportunity to check messages and return calls etc.

5. Compliance with the policy is refreshed in periodic meetings for vehicle drivers and included in work procedure / risk assessment documentation.
6. They challenge unsafe attitudes and behaviours, encourage staff to drive safely, and lead by personal example.
7. All driving activities / operations are risk assessed to ensure compliance with this policy and other safety requirements such as driver vehicle familiarisation, driving time, driver fatigue etc.

Investigation and Formal Procedures

Any vehicle driver alleged to have not driven safely by a member of the public or enforcement officer (Police/Council), or convicted through the Courts, will be subject to investigation, which may result in disciplinary action. The Council's Employee Code of Conduct makes it clear that negligence or non-compliance with any health and safety requirements such as to endanger life or cause unacceptable damage or injury would normally amount to gross misconduct and may result in summary dismissal. The Council gives the highest priority to health and safety and any failure by an employee to comply with the Council's requirements set out above will be treated as being of the utmost seriousness. In the case of an agency worker it is likely that their engagement will be ended immediately.

Notes

1. The Council's Safe Driving at Work Framework Policy, issued by the Occupational Safety Team, has been revised to include this policy.
2. Examples of Acceptable / Unacceptable Use can be found below.

Distractions from Driving

Examples of Acceptable / Unacceptable Use

1. Using communication / technologies, e.g. mob phones, sat nav IT/tablets etc.

Acceptable Use: When the vehicle is stationary, out of gear and the handbrake is applied the operation of a Satnav for the purpose of setting or changing a destination or route setting is, of course, acceptable. For hands free phones, a driver may choose to receive a call subject to ensuring that in doing so they are not distracted from focussing on driving. In the event of an accident the apportionment of blame, the police are likely to take into account if a driver was using a hands free phone.

Unacceptable Use: When the vehicle is not stationary, in gear and handbrake is not applied.

2. Smoking / Vaping and Eating and Drinking

Acceptable Use: When the vehicle is stationary, out of gear and the handbrake is applied. Smoking / Vaping is not permitted in any Council vehicle at any time.

Unacceptable Use: When the vehicle is not stationary, in gear and the handbrake is not applied.

3. Operating/looking at non-essential vehicle controls, e.g. dash cameras

Acceptable Use: When the vehicle is stationary.

Unacceptable: When vehicle is not stationary

4. Playing loud music / wearing of headphones

Acceptable Use: The sound is at a level which does not prevent the driver from hearing external sounds such as emergency services vehicle sirens and horn warnings from other road users.

Unacceptable Use: The sound is at a level which prevents external sound being heard (as above).

5. Reading / writing / personal grooming

Acceptable Use: When the vehicle is stationary with the engine switched off.

Unacceptable Use: When vehicle is in motion.

6. Reaching / leaning over (away from normal driving position)

Acceptable Use: When the vehicle is stationary.

Unacceptable Use: When the vehicle is in motion.

7. Excessively concentrating on the use of 360 degree camera systems

Acceptable Use: When the vehicle is stationary or manoeuvring at a slow speed (<5mph) and the cameras have been fitted as an additional safety aide for such manoeuvring.

Unacceptable Use: When the vehicle is moving at a speed above 5mph.

Note: The Council requires vehicle drivers to concentrate on driving and not to take part in any non driving related activity which is likely to significantly reduce their concentration and which could contribute to an accident.