

Drivers are not to alter or modify company vehicles in any way without seeking prior approval. Personal radios, television or satellite navigation devices and similar devices should only be installed by a qualified vehicle electrician and then only when the installation is approved by the managing director.

Drivers should be aware that such items will not be covered by the Company's insurance policy for damage or theft. Individuals should ensure that they have sufficient additional cover on their household policy, or some other form of insurance.

a) In vehicle distractions

Portable in vehicle driving aids such as satellite navigation, speed camera detectors and mobile phones can be business-efficient but, simultaneously hazardous.

Vehicle manufacturers' standard fit systems are fitted to the highest standards in order to help drivers concentrate. But there are concerns about the fitting of aftermarket devices.

For example, satellite navigation systems and speed camera detectors can be fitted on a vehicle's dashboard or windscreen, often obscuring clear vision. Also, some systems can be adjusted by the driver, so diverting attention away from the primary task, that of driving safely.

Poor location of devices can also affect safety features, such as airbags, or injure the driver in a collision. Those without a dimmer light facility can also reduce driver vision at night. Incorrect fitting and placing of brackets for mobile phones, often at a driver's knee level, can be potentially lethal in a road crash. Therefore the company policy for drivers is the same as for additional attachments, described in the following paragraph;

- Drivers must obtain permission before any ancillary equipment is fitted to a vehicle.
- The positioning of after market equipment should be approved by the vehicle owner, including contract hire and leasing companies, as well being compliant with vehicle manufacturer guidelines.
- Retrofitted satellite navigation systems should not allow route changes to be made while the vehicle is moving and screen brightness should dim automatically when the vehicle's lights are on.
- Finally, drivers should restrict use of all in vehicle devices while driving.

b) Mobile Phone & Other Technology Safety Policy

With effect of the 1st December 2003, the Government introduced new legislation that made it an offence for a driver to:

- Speak or listen to a phone call on a hand held phone or other device.
- Send or receive text messages or images.
- Use any hand held device to access data, including the internet.
- Hold any electronic device used for "accessing" oral, textual or pictorial communications.

Driving is defined as sitting at the wheel of the vehicle with the engine running.

As an employer we cannot and will not "cause or permit" the offence of driving a vehicle that someone cannot properly control.

c) Policy

As a consequence the company policy is to prohibit the use of hand held mobile phones whilst driving. In addition where hands free kits are provided these should only be used for incoming calls and then only when it is safe to do so. The message should be brief; outgoing calls should only be made when the vehicle is parked in a safe, legal place with the engine turned off.

These rules apply to the use of all types of mobile or fixed communication or other electronic equipment including satellite navigation and telematics equipment.

Drivers should also be made aware that under the (Construction and Use) regulations 1986, using a hand-held mobile phone while driving will result in offenders having to pay a fixed penalty notice, or a fine on conviction of up to £1000 for car drivers increasing to £2500 for goods vehicle drivers and drivers of vehicles adapted to carry more than 8 passengers.

More importantly drivers should be aware that from March 1st, 2017 as part of the new Road Safety Act, this is also an endorsable offence, which means drivers, will face a minimum six-point penalty in addition to a fine of £200.

Liam Clear
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