MRC Driving and the Use of Vehicles at Work Best Practice Guide

MRC guide is to provide a safe environment and to employ best practice to ensure health, safety and welfare within the workplace. This document sets the expected best practice guidance for driving and the use of vehicles for business use and must be read in conjunction with the MRC Travel, Subsistence and Expenses Policy found at https://moss.ssc.rcuk.ac.uk/HR/Documents/MRC%20Employee%20Travel,%20Subsistence%20and%20Expenses%20Policy.pdf

Introduction

Almost a third of all road traffic accidents in the UK involve somebody who is “at work”. Health and Safety law applies to work activities on the road just as it does to all other work activities. As such it is the responsibility of the MRC to ensure that, as part of the health and safety management system, an effective guidance is in place to manage the risks associated with the use of vehicles at work.

This guidance for the use of vehicles whilst at work has been prepared to assist units in developing an effective system of controlling the risk to employees who drive on Council business.

Responsibility

Units must have in place systems to ensure the successful implementation of this guidance. The arrangements must consider the wide range of drivers using road vehicles whilst on Council business.

Risk assessments where necessary must be carried out and the appropriate control measures put into place.

All vehicles, whether they are MRC owned, leased or privately owned, must be suitable for the task, be maintained, have the relevant road tax licence, be appropriately insured and have a current MOT certificate.

Drivers must have the necessary licence to drive the class/type of vehicle; be familiar with the vehicle controls before driving and where appropriate training should be provided in safe driving practices for staff who are employed as a driver. e.g. defensive driving and collision avoidance.

The use of mobile telephones, both hand held and hands free, is prohibited whilst driving on Council business. Phones should be switched off whilst driving and only switched on when the vehicle is stationary and it is safe to do so.

Drivers must report any motor vehicle incident and associated injury sustained whilst at work. This will normally be recorded on the "RIVO" accident reporting system.
Assessing the risk

Avoidance of travel
Consideration should be given to avoiding the journey. It may be possible to conduct business by:

- Telephone
- Video or telephone conferencing

Alternative mode of travel
Staff must use public transport as the first option for travel on MRC business. If driving is considered the only practical option then car hire should be chosen over the use of privately owned vehicles.

Motor cycle use must be discouraged and should only be permitted for short journeys. The exceptions to this are the African Units where motorcycles are used in rural and remote areas.

If driving is absolutely necessary then a risk assessment may be required. The following illustrates how such a risk assessment is produced.

Risk assessment
There are 5 steps to a risk assessment, the steps are:

Step 1: Identify the hazard and hazard effect
- consider the driver, the vehicle and the journey.

Step 2: Decide who might be harmed.
- driver, passenger, other road users, pedestrians.

Step 3: Evaluate the risks and decide whether the existing precautions are adequate.
- consider who is driving, how far, frequency, familiarity, pressure to complete within working day leading to fatigue, speeding.

Step 4: Evaluate and is required, implement any further action necessary to control the risks.

Step 5: Record the assessment if appropriate.

Minimising the risk
There are risks involved as soon as a driver takes charge of a vehicle, but when driving for significant distances, or for extended periods of time, whilst on work related activities the risks are significantly increased.

Management must ensure that there are arrangements in place to minimise the risks to those who drive whilst at work, their passengers and other road users that may be affected by their actions.
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MRC Units can identify circumstances where drivers may be exposed to significant risk whilst driving on MRC business using the risk assessment check list (see Appendix 1). Having identified particular risks then reasonable and practicable measures can be taken to minimise those risks by considering the following.

The manager

- It is the manager’s responsibility that, where appropriate, a risk assessment is carried out and that control measures are put in place; for example in MRC African units where there may be a need for long journeys on mud roads. The results of any risk assessment must be communicated to the driver, the co-driver and any passengers.

- Where persons are employed as “drivers” then the manager must ensure that these persons are competent to drive; that s/he holds a valid driving license and has received appropriate training where necessary. They must also ensure that drivers attend an annual medical from the local occupational health provider to ensure they are fit to drive.

- The working day must be agreed between manager and driver. Safe hours of driving and/or working must be agreed and provision made for overnight stays if necessary. Employees must not work all day and then be expected to drive for long periods.

The driver

- It is the individual's personal responsibility to own a valid driver's licence for the class of vehicle they are driving.

- Whilst driving on MRC business, drivers are expected to comply with traffic regulations, be conscious of road safety and demonstrate safe driving and display good driving habits.

- Persons driving vehicles on MRC business will not drink alcohol or be under the influence of drugs, will not drive whilst disqualified or incorrectly licensed, will not drive recklessly, and will stop after a crash or similar incident with which they are involved.

- Drivers must declare any driving convictions that may negate the car insurance.

- Employees should seek the advice of the Occupational Health provider or a local physician if they become aware of a medical condition or take medication which may affect their ability to drive, or the length of time they can drive.

- Drivers within the UK are expected to comply with EU restrictions on hours of driving. Please see appendix 1.

- Drivers in Africa must either conform to the regulations applying within the particular country or local unit rules.
The vehicle
When using a privately owned vehicle on MRC business, the driver is responsible for ensuring that the vehicle;

- is in a roadworthy condition.
- has a current road tax license,
- appropriate for the task
- appropriately insured for business use and,
- has a valid MOT.

It is the individual’s personal responsibility to ensure that he/she fulfils the insurance and ownership requirements for using a private motor vehicle on official business. These are set out in Appendix 1 of the MRC Travel, Subsistence, Hospitality and Expenses Policy. Staff are reminded that failure to follow the procedures is a disciplinary offence.

A formal undertaking must be completed and handed to the designated person at the permanent place of work before any staff member first uses his/her private motor vehicle on official business. This undertaking can also be found at Appendix 1a of the MRC travel, Subsistence and Expenses Policy.

This undertaking document is also reproduced here at Appendix 1a.

- The unit is responsible for MRC owed vehicles. An MRC vehicle must be made secure and parked in a safe position when not in use. MRC vehicles are insured for third party, fire and theft only.

- Vehicles must be maintained and in a clean and roadworthy condition. It is the driver’s responsibility to ensure that a pre-journey safety check is carried out on their own vehicle, the following list is for guidance:

  o Tyres appear road worthy, free of unusual signs of wear or low/high pressure, this includes the spare tyre.
  o Vehicle body is in safe condition and no apparent fuel, oil or other fluid leaks.
  o Seat belts are in place and secured.
  o No load is overhanging the extremity of the vehicle.
  o All warning /hazard and driving lights are in working order.
  o Horn is working.
  o Driving mirrors are clean and suitably adjusted for the driver.
  o Windscreens are in good condition (not obscured by snow/dirt and not chipped, cracked etc.)
  o Wash bottles have a sufficient supply of liquid.
The journey

- When travelling by road, the time allowed for journeys must enable them to be completed without exceeding speed limits.

- Route - the intended journey should follow the safest available route, which may not necessarily be the shortest or quickest.

- Driving time is part of the working day. Very long days must be avoided, particularly in winter. Overnight stops may be necessary to avoid very long days.

- Breaks should be taken in the journey before the driver begins to feel fatigued - as a minimum, a 15 minute break every 2.5 hours is recommended. Where more than one person is travelling, consideration should be given to sharing the driving.

- Consideration should be given to expected weather conditions. For example, if, on the day of travel there is thick fog, icy conditions, heavy snow or extremes of rain the journey should be postponed or cancelled.

- The risks involved in driving abroad must be assessed before the journey is undertaken. The degree of risk will depend on the country involved. Outside Western Europe and North America, it may be appropriate to consider the use of a local driver or taxi in preference to the employee driving.

- The simple journey planner in Appendix 2 will help plan the journey, and the daily driving limit illustration in Appendix 3 shows working time limitations.
Appendix 1

**Travel Risk Assessment Check List**

In collaboration with the driver, an assessment of the risk of any use of a vehicle used for MRC related work activity may be necessary and it is suggested that the following check list be used.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is travel necessary? Have options to avoid or minimise numbers been considered?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Has the use of public transport been considered, assessed and eliminated?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Has driving in adverse conditions been minimised as far as practicable, e.g. avoiding driving in darkness, not driving in bad weather –ice/snow/storm?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Has the travel distance been minimised, consistent with choosing the safest route? (Note: motorways, dual carriageways are safer than other roads. Speed restrictions must be complied with.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Are any medical conditions and/or medication restrictions that apply to any driver taken account of?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Has the duration of the working day been kept to acceptable levels? (the sum of driving time, working time and required breaks must not exceed 13 hours)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Have travel schedules been planned to include sufficient breaks? (Note: 15 minutes every 2.5 hours continuous driving)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is a valid driving licence held by all drivers?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Has the appropriate vehicle been selected for use (is carriage of hazardous, bulky or heavy items possible, see MRC Guidance notes 1,2 &amp; 3 of the Transportation of Hazardous Substances and Materials)</td>
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<tr>
<td>If an MRC, hired or equivalent car is used, is the car roadworthy, with valid road tax and MOT</td>
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<tr>
<td>If any private cars are used do they have appropriate business travel insurance cover and current MOT or equivalent</td>
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<tr>
<td>If an MRC/hired car is used, have all drivers familiarised themselves with the controls, adjusting mirrors and checked the vehicle for obvious defects? (see checklist for MRC vehicles in vehicle requirements above)</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is a mobile phone available for emergency use? Is the driver aware of</td>
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<tr>
<td>the legal restraints upon use of mobile phones (see MRC Staff Bulletin</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>334 entitled Use of hand-held mobile telephones and similar devices</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>whilst driving on MRC business)?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Has essential emergency equipment for use in the event of a breakdown</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>or accident been include in the vehicle manifest? Such equipment may</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>include: mobile telephone for emergency use, first aid kit, warning</td>
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<td>triangle, high visibility jacket, fire extinguisher?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Has the driver been adequately trained for dealing with a break down?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Where appropriate is the vehicle covered by a national breakdown</td>
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<tr>
<td>service?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 2 – Simple journey planner

Do you have to drive?

Plan the journey

- Share the driving vehicle if possible
- Ensure your vehicle is in a safe condition
- Make sure you will be well rested
- Book an overnight stop if necessary
- Avoid driving in peak sleepiness periods

Plan the route

- Avoid driving when you would normally be asleep
- Plan where to take rest breaks – at least every 2 hours
- Plan where to stop for the night
- Check for delays – plan for alternative routes

During the Journey

- Take rest breaks
- Listen to traffic news for delays
- Concentrate on your driving

If you start to feel tired

- Find somewhere safe to stop
- Have a bite to eat and a refreshing non-alcoholic drink
- Get some fresh air if possible

Too tired to continue? Find somewhere safe to stop overnight
Appendix 3

The Daily Driving Limit.
No driver should drive continually for more than a total of 9 hours in any 24 hours. The EU rules require a rest period of 45 minutes or 2 or 3 rest stops, of not less than 15 minutes each that total 45 minutes, must be taken during any 4.5 hour period.

The MRC guidance requires that no driver must drive continuously for more than 2.5 hours without a break of at least 15 minutes.

Hence the driving regime for a single driver should be:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2.5 hours driving</th>
<th>15 minute break</th>
<th>2 hours driving</th>
<th>30 minute break</th>
<th>2.5 hours driving</th>
<th>15 minute break</th>
<th>2 hours driving</th>
<th>30 minute break</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Total 9 hours driving, 1.5 hours cumulative break period.

How should breaks from driving be taken?

During any break a driver must not drive or undertake any other work. If the vehicle has two drivers sharing the driving, then one is permitted to take a break whilst the other drives. Rest periods of less than 15 minutes do not count towards the statutory accumulated break requirement of 45 minutes.

Daily Rest Period.

In each 24 hour period, a driver must have a minimum daily rest period of 11 consecutive hours. Any employee required to drive for a significant period more than once in a week must consider the requirements of the Working Time Directive.

The working day, including driving should not normally exceed 10 hours. This limit may be increased to 12 hours under special circumstances. Increasing the working day to 12 hours when travelling is not acceptable on a regular basis.