

Working drivers are 'crash magnets who kill thousands'

by Denis Campbell

Social Affairs Correspondent

MILLIONS of Britons who regularly drive for their work are potentially lethal 'crash magnets', whose risky behaviour at the wheel makes them much more likely than other road users to cause accidents, new research reveals.

Employees who spend long hours driving to meet colleagues or clients cause some 1,000 deaths a year, almost a third of the UK's annual toll of 3,221 road deaths. They break speed limits, get fined, pick up penalty points and crash more often than other drivers.

The findings emerged from a survey of a range of workers in Strathclyde, including drivers, sales staff, engineers, managers and directors. It was led by Steve Stradling, professor of transport psychology in the Transport Research Institute at Edinburgh's Napier University.

The study, *Factors Influencing the Behaviour of People who Drive at Work*, will be published this week at an international conference on driver behaviour and training. It found that:

- 30 per cent of work drivers questioned had been involved in one or more accidents in the previous three years.

- 56 per cent of their crashes occurred while they were driving for work.

- 15 per cent had been caught speeding during work time over the same period and 10 per cent had been flashed by speed cameras while driving in their leisure time.

- 63 per cent had received penalty points.

- 60 per cent admitted slowing down when they saw cameras, then speeding up for the rest of their journey.

Stradling blamed deadlines, work-related stress, fatigue, use of mobile phones at the wheel and a lack of

driver training for staff. His team said: 'Many respondents view the complex physical and mental task of driving as a time when they can think without distractions.'

Sixty-two per cent of those surveyed, from 23 companies in central Scotland, admitted they were often under time pressures while driving.

Stradling's researchers, Catriona Rae and Lee Martin, said their findings showed

that road safety messages about speeding were not getting through to the drivers who need most to heed them.

Dr Lisa Dorn of Cranfield University, an expert on driver behaviour and the organiser of this week's conference in Edinburgh, said: 'Companies need to conduct psychological profiling of employees to see who has a tendency towards aggression or thrill seeking.'

Edmund King, executive director of the RAC Foundation, said some accidents involving work drivers occurred because staff are put under greater pressure by their employers.

'Ten years ago, a salesman may have had to make six calls a day; now it's 10. So when you get in your car, there's more of a temptation to put your foot down,' said King. 'An employee may hit congestion, be late for a client and miss a sale as a result.'

NO DARLING, WHEN I SAY
I HIT ALL THE TRAFFIC
THIS MORNING I MEAN I
HIT ALL THE TRAFFIC THIS
MORNING



ROBERT THOMPSON