



Flash Bulbs And Memories

Whilst training and practising for the second part of the ADI qualification, many PDIs say they feel pressured to break the speed limit as they are frequently tailgated when driving at 30 mph in a 30 mph zone (or 40 mph in a 40 zone!).

Why does this happen? And why do people have such a poor attitude towards speed limits?

The common complaint raised against speed/safety cameras is that they are only there to raise funds rather than making a positive contribution towards reducing speeding. However, this isn't strictly true - they are usually erected at sites where serious accidents have occurred where speed was considered to be a major contributing factor. Even if drivers do just slow down as they approach and pass the camera, to a certain extent the objective has already been achieved.

So, do I support the use of speed/safety cameras? Only to a point - the driver who just slows down before, then speeds up again after, a camera is still a problem on the roads. Many of these drivers will manage to drive for years and, by keeping a good eye out for the cameras, will keep a fairly clean licence. Equally, many people who consider themselves to be 'good drivers' who never drive at excessive speeds will get caught, fined and have their licence endorsed for relatively minor infringements of the law. A good example of this is a friend of mine (yes, it was a friend and not me!) who was 'flashed' and fined for driving at 35mph in a 30 zone. True, she broke the law, but it was a long straight road and 2am, so the roads were deserted. It was



only a short 30mph stretch near a school, whilst the area before and after the school has a national speed limit in force. Speed or safety cameras cannot exercise judgement or educate people, but simply enforce the strict letter of the law - this inhuman enforcement can breed a great deal of resentment.

Night And Day

It is a commonly held belief that it is safer to drive at night because the roads have less traffic on them. However, it is a fact that the risk of having an accident during the 12 hours of darkness is double that during the day. So maybe it is not so harsh a decision after all? The general rule seems to be to sympathise with someone who has 'been done' as though they have not acted incorrectly or illegally, but have just been 'unlucky'. Speed awareness courses are offered in some areas, but most people see these as a way of avoiding the points rather than an opportunity to learn something new. Most drivers accept that poor lane discipline, failure to signal and tailgating

demonstrate bad driving, but there is a reluctance to accept that driving too fast is also poor driving. It is though, and there is a need to alter that way of thinking.

Changing Times

So why do people have this attitude towards speed? In the 1970s there were drink drive laws in place but the general public, by and large, did not see drink driving as being particularly wrong. People who drove after several drinks were often viewed as 'a bit of a lad' - people would happily admit to friends that they would sometimes drink and drive. These days that has become taboo, and in most social circles it is completely unacceptable to drink and drive, even within the limits allowed, and most people now choose to abstain completely when driving. Someone who drinks heavily and picks up a set of car keys is quite likely to be challenged, with some people going so far as to report them to the police. Anonymous phone lines have been set up for this purpose and people do use them. It is

now only a minority of people who abuse this law, which is there to protect us all. The same thing needs to happen with speeding. It needs to become socially unacceptable to break speed limits or drive at speeds which are inappropriate for the surroundings, irrespective of the speed limit.

Responsibility

So many young people, as they are told by their instructors, simply learn to 'pass the test', giving the textbook answers and satisfying the instructor that they have the right attitude; in particular, towards speed. But during driving lessons they rarely get the chance to choose what speed to drive at, because the instructor is in control. The first time they become 100% responsible for choosing an appropriate speed for the situation, without any advice or prompting, is on the driving test. If they pass that test. . . What do they do as soon as they get that licence? By and large, they do their own thing - which often means speeding up on approach to junctions and taking corners and bends that little bit faster (often to impress the mates!). I have heard young people refer to 'so and so' who has 'written off yet another car', as though this is clever or something to be proud of - it is not. Speed can be exciting and addictive. Driving instructors can, and must, play their part in educating young people, but parents also have to take a huge responsibility in the lifelong example they set to their children. If a young person has always seen fast driving and bad habits then they will copy them and will see this as the standard to achieve, irrespective of what the instructor tells them. **edi**

Jane Taylor is Head of Training for TIC Direct and has been in the industry for over ten years.