



GO BETWEEN

Oxford IAM Group Newsletter

December 2010



IN THE CHAIR

I am currently suffering a nasty case of cabin fever as I am snowed in. For many people, the timing could not have been worse- the last weekend before Christmas, one of the biggest shopping weekends & a time when people are making their holiday get-away or going home. The latest advice is to not travel until it absolutely necessary, yet many people have been, & are, going out & suffering misery in delays, jams & general travel chaos. But exactly how do you define a 'necessary' journey?

It is necessary that I go to work during the week to earn a living, & it's necessary that I drive to & from my place of employment. The weather does not alter the fact that I need to earn a living, or change where I work. On the other hand, my job, while important to me, my employers & our customers, is not a vital public service. It would be inconvenient to our customers & our business to miss a day or two, but nobody's life depends on it. What if you are at a friend or relatives? Do you impose on their hospitality, when they may not be prepared for houseguests? Do you attempt to make it back home? What if you are on medication & hadn't bargained on being away? How do you weigh up the risk of a journey against the possible risk to your health?

What about shopping? Not many of us shop for more than a week at a time. Is it 'necessary' to get to a supermarket because you have run out of bread & milk, or should you manage with what you have in the back of the cupboard? Should you expect the supermarket home delivery service to bring your provisions if you are not prepared to go out yourself? How much of your life do you put 'on hold' until the weather improves, bearing in mind it could be hours, days or (unlikely here!) weeks before normality returns? It isn't always

practical to stay in.

Whatever you decide to do, minimise the risks as much as possible & take care.

Wishing you all a very happy festive season & a successful New Year,

Helen (the Chair in the Chair)



RECENT PASSES

Congratulations to Siobhan Coey & Richard Leader on passing their Car tests, and to Patrick Taylor for passing the motorcycle test.

GIFT VOUCHERS

Stuck for that last-minute Christmas present? IAM Gift Vouchers make the perfect present for family and friends. They come in attractive gift envelopes & are redeemable across the UK. Valid to December 2011, prices range from £15 to £150 & are suitable for members & non-members. Options include:

IAM Cycle Membership Gift voucher £15.00 IAM Cycling Members receive a fantastic pack of benefits, 12 months cycle membership, including "How to be a better cyclist" book, IAM "Total Cycle Assist" insurance policy, 10% discount vouchers for Halfords and a hi-viz draw string bag.

DriveCheck55 Gift voucher £35.00 A one hour drive with an IAM Examiner designed for the older driver

RideCheckPlus Gift voucher £40.00 A one hour ride with an IAM Examiner designed for non-members.

IAM Track based Skills Day voucher £150.00 Open to members and non-members, this voucher entitles the recipient to attend any 2011 IAM car or bike track based skills day.

Momentum Gift voucher £40.00 Designed to offer young drivers a challenging mix of online and on-road assessments with a focus on the areas in which young drivers can be vulnerable.

RoadRiderPlus Gift voucher £75.00 Designed for scooter, moped and sub 125cc riders post CBT and preparing for their test. The course comprises of a half day training course with an MCITA professional trainer and fully personalised riding report.

Skill for Life Drivers/ Riders programme Gift token £125.00 This is our most popular course, providing everything required to take and pass the advanced driving or motorcycling test and become a full member of the IAM.

See the website www.iam.org.uk for more details!

Before you even consider setting out:

- Is your journey really necessary or can you use public transport instead?
- Have you looked at the weather forecast for the route you intend taking?
- Have you checked for road blockages and diversions for your intended route?
- Do you have a method of taking alternative routes if you have to? If it's snowy can you avoid going up (and down!) hills for instance?
- Can you stick to main routes as they are normally cleared first?
- Honestly assess your experience in the prevailing driving conditions and be aware of your own and the vehicles limitations.
- Ensure your vehicle is within the required servicing and maintenance scheduling.
- Do you have breakdown cover and emergency equipment (see below) in the vehicle in case you are stranded in it overnight...or even longer?
- Make sure your mobile is fully charged before setting off and carry an in car charger with you.
- If fuel stations are closed or inaccessible, do you have sufficient fuel for the round trip?
- Do not attempt a journey if you are ill or have been without sleep; you will probably be doing two 'night' drives when driving in the winter months which make the drive more tiring.

Before you actually set out:

- When demisting and preparing the vehicle, do not leave your keys in the vehicle whilst unattended (if the vehicle is taken with your keys in it this may invalidate your insurance).
- Clear all glass (including light lenses) of snow, ice, frost or mist before setting out.
- Clean off your wipers and ensure your washer bottle full and has proper additive to stop it freezing? Free the wipers from the screen before first use if the temperature is sub zero.
- Check that all vehicle lights are working properly and use dipped headlights on the move.
- Set the radio to the station that gives the best traffic information.
- Acknowledge the fact that braking distances in sub zero conditions can be 10 times the normal distance and that you will need to drive slower and with more space to the front.

Once on the move:

Motorways

- Minimise distractions – sub zero weather calls for 100% concentration.
- Driving in adverse weather is more debilitating, ensure you plan staged stops into your journey.
- Ice will form on the top of lorry trailers and can break free when the lorry thaws when they are at speed causing a large fall of ice onto the road in front.
- Watch for and comply with matrix warning signs related to weather warnings.
- Beware of gritting and move past the Gritter smoothly and in a lane that is as far away from the Gritter as possible.
- If snowing steadily, be prepared to stop periodically to sponge off the headlights and tail lights.
- Watch for spray from snow or slush as vehicles change lanes.

A Roads

- Make sure you keep well within posted speed limits and be smooth with all steering, accelerator and braking inputs.
- Leave as much space around you as you can and at all times, be defensive.
- If the vehicle in front hasn't cleared the thick layer of snow off their vehicle roof and bonnet it could break loose at speed, land on your windscreen and obscure your vision.
- Cold tyres will never give as much grip as warm ones as the tread cannot flex to the road surface.
- Be aware that your direction of travel may mean that you experience loss of vision due to glare at the start and or the end of your drive.
- Other drivers may cause you to lose vision by not dipping their headlights, look to the left hand roadside and use this to navigate past the hazard.

B Roads

- Think ahead - water will collect in dips and form ice and snow drifts will build up adjacent to gaps in walls or hedgerows.
- Open bridges will ice up before surrounding roads as freezing air cools the underside; areas of road in the shade of hedges or trees will still be frozen even if the main road is not.

- If it starts to snow heavily don't be fearful of fresh unpacked snow – it provides more grip than compressed snow.....which is ice, and therefore completely grip less.
- Do not be tempted to follow other vehicles closely up or down hills especially on bends, let them clear the hazard before attempting to follow.

Urban Roads

- Most pedestrians wear dark clothing in winter that is difficult to see against shop and street lights.
- Pedestrians wear hats, hoods and umbrellas in poor weather and these can reduce their field of vision.
- Only use fog lights in less than 100m visibility see and be seen.
- Other driver may just be starting their journey and still have misted up or snow covered screens, they may not be able to see you!
- Driving in and out of urban areas where the lighting levels are high may affect your night vision.

Parking & Manoeuvring

- Ensure your vehicle is parked well away from other vehicles (they are usually near the building entrance).
- Wind down the driver's window (about an inch) you will be better placed to hear the movement of other vehicles which are much quieter when on snow.
- Reverse park to allow you to have the best view when departing.
- Before you drive off be aware that your vision may have to adjust from the high level lighting of the building or activity you have just been undertaking.
- Make the same vehicle checks before moving off that you have made when starting the journey.
- Use 2nd gear if moving off in snow as this will remove some of the tendency for the road wheel to slip.

Personal Safety

- Inform someone of your expected arrival time at your destination and your contact number.
- Do not leave your vehicle unlocked whilst you are not inside, such as refuelling or stopping for a break, even if you are just cleaning the lights.
- When you stop do not choose remote areas, use service stations or similar facilities.
- Do not unlock your vehicle until you are next to it and have had a look around.

Getting stranded

- If you become stranded, stay with the vehicle and use its lights horn etc to attract attention.
- Run the engine for about 10 minutes at a time to utilise the heater but do not run it all the time.
- Ensure that you can open and close at least one window to allow ventilation.
- Put on all spare clothing whilst you are still warm.
- If there are other motorists who are also trapped consider all getting into one vehicle and take turns in sleeping.
- Monitor traffic information (usually on the 15, 30 45 60 minute interval) but do not leave the radio on all the time.

General tips.

- If a skid starts, don't panic. No matter where the vehicle is pointing keep looking where you want the vehicle to go, as this is the reference point for how much you are offline.
- Calmly and smoothly remove the cause, usually too much speed for the conditions, excessive steering or brake application, steer into the skid.
- If the weather is hovering around the zero mark be prepared for the formation of black ice (caused by rain falling on an already frozen surface) and adjust speed accordingly.
- Driving in a snow blizzard or fog can be mesmerising. Maintain an active eye scanning routine. Varying focal responses will keep you alert and maintain points of reference.

Suggested Safety Kit

At least a litre of drinkable fluid; 4 x energy bars; waterproof boots; blanket; winter jacket; scarf; gloves; hat; reflective jacket; piece of old carpet; snow shovel; torch and auxiliary power lead connectable beacon lamp; reflective warning triangle; sponge; paper and pencil (not a biro!) mobile telephone.

Ian Jeffs, Managing Director and Senior Instructor, ROADCRAFT Driver Training
ian@roadcraft-driving.com

DIARY 2011

January No meeting
February 2 TBC
March 2 John Stepney - Service By Emergency Rider Volunteers
6th April TBC
4th May TBC
1st June Demonstration Drives and Ride Outs
6th July Demonstration Drives and Ride Outs
3rd August Demonstration Drives and Ride Outs
7th September TBC
5th October Lois Pryce: One Woman, One Motorcycle, 20,000 Miles Across the Americas
2nd November OAGAM AGM
7th December Quiz Night and mince pies

Meetings take place at Exeter Hall, Kidlington, starting at 8pm sharp. Everyone is welcome, and there's tea, coffee & biscuits provided.

Committee Members

Helen Deeley – Chairman & Newsletter Editor
Tony Chalkly -Vice Chair & Secretary
Clive Stayt -Vice Chair & Chief Car Observer
Nick Morse - Treasurer
Duncan Jones - Membership Secretary
Chris Caspell - Car Associate Co-ordinator

John Lang - Chief Motorcycle Observer & Co-ordinator
Mark McArthur-Christie – Press Officer
Mark Reddin
Peter Ingram

All Contributions will be gratefully received, however Editors' decisions on content are final, & I reserve the right to edit articles. Any opinions stated are personal unless otherwise noted.

Contact me: Helen Deeley- bikerfloss@hotmail.co.uk