**Drug Driving Toolbox Talk**

It is illegal to drive if you are unfit to do so due to legal or illegal drugs. In March 2015 UK law changed to make it easier for the Police to catch and prosecute drug drivers. It is now against the law to drive a vehicle whilst under the influence of illegal drugs or certain medical drugs that show as being above specific levels, limits are different for each drug.

The new law does allow drivers with trace amounts of illegal drugs to get behind the wheel of a vehicle however, when illegal drug limits are exceeded these drivers will be prosecuted whether their driving was impaired or not. However, drivers taking prescription medicines as directed by their doctor and whose driving is unimpaired are within the law.

# Drug Effects

Alcohol affects the way we drive but drugs have a range of different affects on driving too including:

* slower reaction times
* erratic and aggressive behaviour
* inability to concentrate
* hallucinations and dizziness
* fatigue and panic attacks

Different drugs have different speeds in which they are broken down by the body and the new prescribed limits reflect these details to ensure drivers are not prosecuted for taking medically prescribed drugs in appropriate quantities. The law now allows drivers to have small amounts of illegal substances in their bodies to cover situations for example where people have unintentionally and passively inhaled cannabis smoke whilst in public places.

Drugs that are covered by the new offence include eight illegal drugs and eight prescription drugs and these include, Cannabis, Cocaine, Morphine, Methadone, Ketamine and Diazepam. The mixing of drugs with alcohol to ‘sharpen up’ will only reduce driving ability and cause the driver to be a danger to themselves and others on the road.

# If you get caught

The Police can now conduct drug tests at the roadside or at the police station to detect drivers who are over the legal drugs limit. Saliva tests or a drugalyser, similar to a breathalyser are both used. To prosecute a driver the Police need to show that the driver had taken drugs, not that the drugs were impairing their ability to drive. Convicted drivers will face a number of consequences including:

* a minimum 12 months driving ban
* a large fine up to £5,000
* a prison sentence
* a criminal record and the offence recorded on their licence for 11 years
* likely job loss
* increased car insurance premiums
* difficulty travelling abroad, especially to the USA

# Remember the essentials

Drivers should follow these recommendations:

* check prescription medicines for ‘affects driving’ statements
* continue to take your medicines but do not drive until you have checked you are safe to drive whilst taking the medication
* be aware of how dosage alterations could affect your driving
* never drive if you have taken illegal drugs
* Drivers who follow their medication guidance carefully and seek medical advice should be safe to continue driving whilst taking prescription drugs.

**For discussion**

1. Did you know that prescription drugs could affect your ability to drive safely?
2. Were you aware of the current drug driving penalties?
3. Did you know the methods the Police use to test for drugs in your body?

Comments:

Date:

Meeting conducted by:

# Attendees

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