**Drivers - The importance of systems, reporting and checks**

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Your employer must make sure that you are safe and legally compliant when driving on business. Fundamental steps in this process involve processes to check qualifications, on-road behaviour, and insurance, and investigate any incident that you might be involved in.

It’s essential that your organisation can check your driving licence qualification if you will be driving on business. They need to know that you are qualified for the vehicle you are using, and that you have no legal restrictions on your licence – for instance, a temporary driving ban. Usually, employers will check licences at regular intervals.

This means you will need to consent to your employer, or a fleet management company working on their behalf, checking this data with DVLA (the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency). You should also tell your employer if you accrue points on your licence or receive any motoring convictions.

If you are driving your own vehicle, then you will also need to have business motor insurance. You must tell your insurer if you have any collision or incident, whether that was on a personal or business trip.

**Why is this important?**

If you are caught [driving without an appropriate licence](https://www.cps.gov.uk/crime-info/driving-offences) you risk facing a fine of up to £1,000 and three to six points on your licence. Your vehicle can also be seized. ‘Driving unlicenced’ includes failing to renew your driving licence every 10 years yet continuing to drive. If [you drive without insurance,](https://www.gov.uk/vehicle-insurance/driving-without-insurance) you may receive a fixed penalty of £300 and six points but, if it goes to court, the fine is unlimited.

[Driving while disqualified](https://www.stpaulschambers.com/what-happens-if-you-drive-without-a-licence/) can lead to a custodial sentence.

It is very important that your employer has up-to-date information about your driving status for three reasons:

* They have a legal obligation to assess and mitigate risk, as well as to ensure that all their drivers are legally compliant.
* Your employer’s fleet insurance might be dependent upon the profile of the drivers on their fleet, or how they manage incidents or driver risk factors. Having points on your licence may be one of these risk factors and your employer might want to provide training or coaching in relevant areas to ensure that you won’t make the same mistakes while driving for work.
* The third and arguably most important reason is it makes you and all of us safer. Even if *you* are an excellent driver, this process helps employers across the country highlight those drivers who should not be driving, or who require training – and that means you are less likely to be sharing the road with problematic or risky drivers.



**Incident investigation**

No one who has been involved in a collision of any kind feels cheered by the words ‘incident investigation’. The reality is that this is a vital process. It might feel like you are in the frame simply because you were behind the wheel, but a good incident investigation isn’t looking for fault. Good incident investigators following a sound process to look for what the company can learn and what they should do to make it easier for drivers to avoid that error or type of incident in the future.

You can read more about the process in the National Highways Incident Investigation toolkit if you are interested.

That’s not to say that you won’t be held to account if you broke the rules of the road, or your employer’s policies. However, the company’s investigation should be about establishing:

* what actually happened
* why it happened
* whether all the processes and policies which would have helped to prevent this were in place
* if they were, whether anyone involved with planning, managing, loading the vehicle or undertaking that journey failed to follow them
* whether those policies or procedures need to be created or changed
* whether anything can be changed to prevent such an incident in the future.

It’s really useful, therefore, if you tell your manager or whoever investigates an incident as much about the circumstances as you can. How far you had driven, when you had last taken a break, whether the workload was reasonable, your state of mind, the actions of the people around you… anything can be relevant.



**Driver behaviour monitoring**

Telematics and camera technology can sound intrusive if you haven’t driven a vehicle which is equipped with them before. This can be especially true of inward-facing cameras which watch the driver.

However, there are lots of benefits to drivers:

1. It gives an objective account of what you did, and what the vehicle was doing immediately before an incident. At-work drivers are far more likely to be exonerated from fault in collisions where telematics and camera evidence is available. Without it, it’s very often your word against the other driver’s – and commercial vehicles tend to be blamed because they are memorable.
2. It will give your employer insights into your driving, and they can fill those knowledge or skills gaps with training or coaching. This makes you a better driver, and a better role model for other road users and family members.
3. Inward-facing cameras can catch things you may not be aware of – such as drowsiness – before you come to harm. Inward-facing cameras have also saved lives by alerting managers that a driver was having a heart attack and getting help sent immediately.

The major argument against telematics and cameras is that they represent an invasion of privacy, with unions claiming that inward-facing cameras allow bosses to spy on drivers in real-time. However, this is highly unlikely for several reasons:

1. Why would anyone want to? It’s not that interesting, watching someone drive along a road.
2. It takes huge bandwidth to capture and watch real-time streaming – way too much for a company to be simultaneously monitoring several drivers, let alone dozens or hundreds of them.
3. Very few managers have the time to watch all the exception reporting generated by their cameras as it is, which is why they often use external providers like Lytx or Solera SmartDrive.
4. The major uses of real-time streaming are short training drives, where a coach can help and guide a driver from the office, or if a driver wants a witness or support.
5. Almost all camera systems turn off when the engine stops, and don’t turn on again until the full ignition cycle occurs, so they don’t start working just because you switch the aircon or the radio on during your break.
6. Your data and privacy are protected by [GDPR](https://www.market-inspector.co.uk/vehicle-tracking/laws), which means that your company must tell you exactly what data it collects, who sees it, and for what purpose, and they require your explicit, informed consent. The employer must also minimise intrusion, so any real-time streaming must be upfront, consensual, and for a very good reason.
7. Most cameras are designed to start filming only when there is an exception event such as harsh braking. You can voluntarily switch them on if you want back up – for instance, if you are a lone worker in a remote location, or you feel uneasy at a truck stop.

Make sure you are fully briefed on the technology in your vehicle, so you know exactly what it can and can’t do, who sees the data and how it is used. You can also ask how long data is kept for, and how soon you could have your data wiped if you leave the company. Most drivers feel much more comfortable when they understand it and embrace the safety and support benefits.

Remember, your safety matters. At the end of the day that’s the main purpose of all vehicle technology – to keep you and those around you safe.