



# OAMPS

HAZARDOUS INDUSTRIES

## Roadside eye tests – Would Your Drivers Pass?

As an employer, you have legal obligations to any employees who drive whilst at work – that's not news. However, there are areas that you should focus on to protect yourself from prosecution and ensure that your own insurance is not prejudiced.

Eyesight tests are currently a hot topic, with Police forces in Thames Valley, Hampshire and the West Midlands asking any motorist stopped from September 2018 to read a number plate from 20 metres.

As the police have the power to revoke the licence of any drivers who fail the roadside eye test, this could prove to be a major operational issue for employers who have staff operating company vehicles to deliver their services to their clients. Imagine having even 5 per cent of your operational workforce unable to use your vehicles to provide your services, get to site or move goods.

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The trial is supported by road safety charity, Brake, with the data providing up-to-date insight into the extent to which poor driver vision is a factor in automotive accidents, but the feedback from other bodies is already causing concern.

Research by the Association of Optometrists published in November 2017 found that around 35 per cent of optometrists saw patients in the preceding month who continued to drive, despite being told their vision was below the legal standard, and research from Direct Line in 2016 revealed some more sobering statistics, including the fact that some 13.3 million people risk their lives (and the lives of others on the road) by driving without wearing their glasses. Even scarier is that 21 per cent of those who need glasses or contact lenses to drive safely always drive without them!

The RAC has also said that road crashes caused by poor driver vision are estimated to cause 3,000 casualties and cost £33 million per year in the UK; with more people working into their sixties and beyond, it's likely to be a growing problem for businesses with company vehicles.

It would be reasonable to expect companies to have processes in place to ensure that their vehicles are being operated by employees with eyesight that meets the legal standard, so it's entirely conceivable that company directors or managers may be held legally liable for an accident caused by an employee's sub-standard vision where there were insufficient checks in place.

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