



# The Road Observer

The Newsletter of the North Down Advanced Motorists (Group 8199)

Helping to Improve The Standard of Driving and Riding on the Roads in Northern Ireland and the Advancement of Road Safety



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## Good luck and safe driving to any Associate(s) approaching their test.

We usually meet (unless otherwise stated) at the Boathouse, which is situated in the harbour carpark, at Groomspoint at 7.00pm on the second Tuesday of each month (except July). For more details of our programme please see the section entitled "Dates for Your Diary". If anyone has recently done their test, don't forget to contact John (07967 010443) for a debrief. Observers, please keep John acquainted with the progress of your Associate(s).

**Don't Forget  
Extra Night - Slot Cars - Tue 31st March (£8)  
No Group Night this Month - Easter Tuesday**

## March Group Night with Damian Coll Road Traffic Collision Investigation

Tuesday, 10th March, 2009

The word had definitely got round since Damian's last visit with us in November when he gave such an interesting and stimulating talk on the Road Traffic Collisions. The hall was virtually packed for 'Part Two' which, as it turned out was every bit as good as 'Part One'.

After Trevor's welcome Damian took over and delivered another superb presentation of accidents and collisions complete with photographs and diagrams.

He started off with a few facts and figures, the first of which was that Collision Fatalities are continuing to reduce in number - 135 in 2005 to 126 in 2006, to 113 in 2007, to 106 in 2008. He then showed us again, the slide of the Venn diagram that we had seen last November which very graphically showed that most collisions (between 91% and 95.9%) have Human Error as their cause.

We then went on to look at a variety of locations where collisions had taken place. These had all been well photographed, so with the photographs and Damian's very clear descriptions of what had occurred we soon got a very clear grasp of what had taken place. What was very interesting was what strategies had been employed to try to prevent such collisions from happening again e.g. better signing, introduction of a slip-road, staggering of crossroads, smoothing out of 'hidden' dips, etc.

We also got an insight into the work that is done away from the collision scene when Damian talked us through the investigation that had been carried out when a runaway lorry ran into some houses. In this case the main problem had been the lorry's brakes. Again we were shown the slides to illustrate the faults.

All too soon Damian ran out of time yet again after another exceptionally interesting talk. The full house really appreciated his talk and it was obvious that he could have been bombarded with questions for another couple of hours if the Boathouse's caretaker would have allowed it. Damian is a victim of his own success because he is definitely on our list for another talk in the future.

## Time to prepare for daylight savings

British summer time begins this Sunday as the clocks jump forward an hour and daylight savings begin. Commuters, who have enjoyed the lighter mornings, will be making the journey to work in darkness for the next few weeks, and the IAM (Institute of Advanced Motorists) today warns there are potential dangers that come with driving in the dark during peak hours. Director of IAM Policy and Research, Neil Greig, said: "IAM research has shown that most accidents happen during peak hours. For the first few weeks of the clock change, motorists will need to get used to driving in darker conditions and take extra care."

Reduced visibility makes it harder to read the road ahead and yields less information for a driver. Other road users, road signs and objects are harder to see and road conditions and edges become indistinct. Motorists will also find it harder to wake up and are more likely to

grow tired. An estimated one in five motorway crashes are fatigue related. It is also important to consider vehicle condition when driving in the dark and preparing for the coming summer sunshine. Windows (inside and out), mirrors and the lenses of lights and indicators should be kept clean. It is also important to ensure coolant and water levels are topped up to ensure the vehicle doesn't overheat.

## PERSONAL SAFETY ON THE ROAD

Motorists today face more risks than ever on the road and women on their own can feel particularly vulnerable. If you break down when driving alone these guidelines from the IAM may help to make it a less unnerving experience.

### • Ensure somebody knows your route and arrival time.

Plan your journey properly and let somebody know your route and when you expect to arrive. If that person is not at your destination, don't forget to let them know that you have arrived safely.

### • Do not panic if you break down.

If you can, stop where there are lights, houses, people and a telephone. This clearly would not be possible if your car fails completely or in extremely remote areas.

### • Immediately call for assistance.

Mobile phones, used properly in this situation, can be invaluable. When you call, stress to the motoring organisation or police if you are a woman alone. They are all geared to giving you priority attention.

### • Verify offers of help are genuine.

If somebody offers help, ask for assistance through a closed window unless you are SURE they are trustworthy (e.g. Police, AA or RAC patrols). Make a note of car numbers of others who offer to help or appear to be showing an interest in you. If you are on the telephone give the car registrations and let the driver know you have done so.

### • Motorways need extra caution.

Pull well over to the left of the hard shoulder and, if possible, stop by an emergency telephone. If you have to walk, telephones are every mile, so the furthest you should have to walk is half a mile. Every 100 yards there is a post with an arrow pointing to the nearest telephone. Use the nearest telephone but remember if you have to walk forwards do keep glancing behind you to keep an eye on traffic movements. After phoning return to your car and if circumstances allow, remain outside the car on the verge (out of sight of oncoming traffic). If you do remain in the car, lock the doors and sit in the front passenger seat to create the impression that you are not alone. Females in this situation can wear a baseball cap to further minimize unwanted attention. Remember, there is a greater chance of being injured or killed in an accident with your car parked on the hard shoulder than of being personally attacked. At night, to extend battery life, use your hazard warning lights and sidelights only. For additional safety you may want to carry a high visibility (reflective in the dark) waistcoat or jacket in your vehicle, which will also provide protection if the weather is wet and windy.

### • Keep valuables out of sight

You will feel safer if your car doors are locked and the windows closed when driving in slow-moving urban traffic, but unlocked if you are making progress. This will ease your exit in the event of an accident. Keep lap top computers, handbags and shopping bags out of sight and avoid eye contact with other road users.

Why not keep this sheet in your glovebox, perhaps including your AA/RAC/Green Flag contact number at the top - then you will have it to hand, if you really need it!

## Dates for Your Diary

31st Mar, 2009 Extra Night - Slot Cars 7.00pm £8.00 per person inc. light refreshments. (149 Glen Road, Comber)  
7th Apr, 2009 STAC 17/5 - Boathouse, 7.15pm  
14th Apr, 2009 **NO GROUP MEETING - EASTER TUESDAY**  
28th Apr, 2009 STAC 17/6 - Boathouse, 7.15pm  
5th May, 2009 STAC 17/7 - Boathouse, 7.15pm  
12th May, 2009 Group Night - Tabletop Navigation Exercise

The views expressed in the 'Road Observer' are not necessarily those of the Editor, the Group or the Institute of Advanced Motorists

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