



# 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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**Congratulations this month go to -  
Edward Carson, Hèidi Doogan and  
Simon Doogan  
on becoming Members of the Institute.  
Good luck and safe driving to any Associate(s)  
approaching their test.**

This month we would like to welcome, as new Members, Nicholas Bloch, Dee Bolt, Brian Flanagan and Paul Smith. We hope that they will not only gain from being members of our Group but will also enjoy the friendship and camaraderie of our get-togethers. We usually meet (unless otherwise stated) at the Boathouse, which is situated in the harbour carpark, at Groomsport 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).

### **December Group Night NDAM Group Christmas Dinner Tuesday, 9 Dec 2008**

For our third annual Christmas Dinner we met at Daft Eddie's Restaurant on Sketrick Island. 55 IAM members and friends including the Honda Goldwing club sat down to a sumptuous feast. Trevor welcomed all the diners and wished everyone a good night's enjoyment. After the meal had been enjoyed the two Wendys ran a ballot where most tables won at least one prize. Thanks to all who helped to organise a good night's enjoyment.

### **Keep seasonal excess off the roads says IAM**

IAM Director of Policy and Research, Neil Greig, said: "The vast majority of drivers believe drinking and driving is socially unacceptable and potentially lethal. But in the run-up to Christmas, daily routines change, sometimes unexpectedly. Extra social occasions with friends, family and colleagues can place those who would not normally drink and drive in tricky situations, such as what to do after the office Christmas party. But it is crucial to decide firmly at the outset either not to drink or to leave the car where it is - even if that is the train station car park. "The wrong decision will bring instant justice, as the police can haul you into court the next day for a fine and a year's driving ban and, if you cause a fatal or serious accident, a prison sentence of up to 14 years can apply. Then there are the less formal penalties, such as the inconvenience of being car-less, the possibility of losing your job and the social stigma of a criminal record. When you eventually get back behind the wheel, you will face years of sky-high insurance costs."

Remember:

- Even one drink can reduce your determination not to drive at parties - don't forget drinks measures at parties will normally be more generous than those served in pubs..
- You face being breathalysed if you are involved in a road accident - even if it is not your fault.
- Drinking heavily the night before can put you over the legal limit the morning after.
- As you make your way home without the car, remember that a high proportion of road accidents involve pedestrians who have been drinking. Don't attempt to walk home drunk along rural roads or attempt to cross busy roads you only know as a driver.
- If you are driving, don't drink; and always refuse a lift from someone you know has been drinking.

### **IAM's top tips for driving in winter weather**

With blizzards and plunging temperatures forecast across the UK this weekend, the IAM (Institute of Advanced Motorists) has warned of the increased danger for road users.

If the weather is bad, drive only if it is necessary. If the journey is necessary, drivers should ensure their car is properly prepared and they know how to cope with changing road conditions.

IAM advice for motorists driving in bad winter weather conditions is:

- Take it slow and allow extra time for the journey, even if it is the usual work or school run. Other traffic on the road will be driving slower.
- In snow or ice, slow down and keep well back from the vehicle in front. When roads are slippery, it will take ten times longer to stop so drivers need to look a long way ahead and plan to move lanes as necessary
- Use low gears to help keep traction, especially on hills, and use gears to restrain speed on downhill sections to avoid the need to brake
- The road in front of vehicles clearing snow is likely to be worse than the road behind. Don't pass these vehicles
- Check the windscreen washer is topped up with windscreen washer fluid for the appropriate outside temperature and that the wiper blades are clean. Drivers also need a clear view out of all windows not just the windscreen
- Turn on headlights to see and be seen. Bad weather causes poor visibility for all motorists
- Pack an emergency kit (such as warm outdoor clothes, a reflective jacket, a torch, and a fully charged mobile phone.)

Drivers should remember to be cautious at all times, check the weather forecast before heading off on their journey, and prepare for familiar, short journeys as well as long ones.

### **Move over for bikers**

This advice is for car drivers who, for various reasons, fail to see motorcycles coming towards them.

This problem is particularly acute at junctions. "Sorry mate I didn't see you" is for too many bikers the last words they hear before they are put in the ambulance. Drivers should check carefully for all oncoming traffic at junctions when emerging.

There are other things that drivers can do to ease the passage of motorcycles, particularly in heavy congestion that in turn will mean a safer journey for everybody.

If stuck in dense traffic, keep checking mirrors for bikes. Bikers should also use their headlights to make them easier to be seen. If a biker is trying to 'filter' - make their way through the traffic by riding slowly between stationary vehicles, or riding on the white line in the middle of the road - car drivers should make a point of creating space for them if they can do so safely. By pulling over slightly, after checking in rear-view mirrors to make sure the path is clear, drivers can make the difference between letting a biker past or adding to the congestion.

Never be tempted to vent frustration with the traffic by getting in the way of a motorcycle on purpose. The traffic won't go any faster and dangerous driving may contribute to a collision which will add to congestion rather than alleviate it.

### **Dates for Your Diary**

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|----------------|---|
| 13th Jan, 2009 | <b>Group Night</b> - STAC 17 Enrolment<br>Two wheel talk with Lyn, William and Keith.     |
| 3rd Feb, 2009  | STAC 17/1 - Boathouse, 7.15pm. First in a series of talks and drives for new Associates.  |
| 10th Feb, 2009 | Group Night - 10-Pin Bowling at the Dundonald Ice Bowl.                                   |
| 24th Feb, 2009 | STAC 17/2 - Boathouse, 7.15pm. Second in a series of talks and drives for new Associates. |
| 3rd Mar, 2009  | STAC 17/3 - Boathouse, 7.15pm.  |

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