



The **BEDFORD** Group of RoSPA Advanced Drivers and Riders Members Newsletter

Visit the **BEDFORD** Group online at www.road-a-bedford.org.uk **July 2011**

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July Meeting

The Importance of Learning Resuscitation

This month Bill Brady will give a talk about the free 2 hour course provided by the British Heart Foundation on the techniques needed, that anyone can carry out, to resuscitate someone experiencing a heart attack. You never know when you might need to use those life saving skills, at home, at work, at sports activities, during leisure activities and on the road.

We hope to see you at 8pm on Tuesday 19th July 2011 at the Training Centre of the Bedfordshire and Luton Fire and Rescue Service, Southfields Road, Kempston

June meeting: It was an enjoyable and informative evening for those who attended. Bill and Stan took several groups out for a 20 minute demonstration and commentary drive. A chance to see good driving practice in action, ask questions and make comment on the drive itself. Other groups took the "blindfold test" where you sit in your vehicle with a blind-fold on and are then instructed to locate the controls and switches in the car. A task in some cars that is made all the more difficult by manufacturers giving us more switches at each model upgrade. My Ford now has 12 closely spaced small switches to control heating and ventilation that on a previous model was catered for by 3 big rotary dials.

plus one switch.



Above: 12 switches alone are used just for ventilation and air conditioning!

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The newer vehicle looks more modern, but it is virtually impossible to select the switch you want without looking at it! The rotary controls of the pre-face lift model were much easier to locate and 'use by feel' without having to look each time for their location. Fortunately the hazard warning lights switch still sits in a centrally placed location that is easy to locate and it is not too small!

UK Car Occupant Road Deaths Fall

Figures from the Department of Transport show that 842 car occupants were killed whilst driving in 2010, which is 20% down from 2009. But these figures are not unfortunately attributable to improvements in driving standards. Instead industry experts are attributing the reduction in deaths to ever increasing safety improvements in vehicles. This confirms what RoSPA Driving Examiner and Metropolitan Traffic Officer, Simon Hill said in his presentation to us in July 2009. Overall road deaths fell by 16% from 2009 to 1,857 in 2010. Still I am sure you would agree far too high and most deaths are probably caused by a driver error / distraction. It is believed that the government's year long £2,000 scrappage scheme which saw 380,000 vehicles over 10 years old removed from our roads to be replaced with new vehicles has helped to protect road users from death. Many of the cars sent to the scrapyard will have been built before the introduction of the European New Car Assessment Programme (EuroNCAP) safety tests were introduced in 1997. These crash tests transformed the car industry by allowing car buyers to see what might happen to their vehicle in a crash situation. Cars were crashed into a deformable block, which identified weaknesses in the car's structure. Since then side impact tests have

been added and assessment of the vehicle structure for minimising injury to pedestrians is also carried out in the tests. This could also have helped to reduce fatalities suffered by those hit by vehicles.

Safety Progress: New cars now come with a host of safety features as standard that only 10 years ago would have only been available on top of the range vehicles. One of the problems with these safety features is that it can encourage drivers to take greater risks because of the (wrongly) perceived belief that the safety feature offers greater protection. Many drivers for example actually think that anti-lock braking systems (ABS) can stop a vehicle in a shorter distance than a vehicle without ABS. So they then drive closer to the vehicle in front: ABS does not reduce stopping distances in the majority of circumstances. The big safety feature of ABS is that it allows you to retain steering control under harsh braking as the system prevents wheel lock up. This does confirm that driver education / training is still needed on both driving skills and the vehicle itself.

An informed safety conscious driver would hope to always be driving in such a way that harsh braking and the risk of wheel lock never happens – ABS being the last resort safety aid that is rarely (hopefully never) needed.

For those who want to see how a host of vehicles perform in crash tests check out www.euroncap.com

August is our summer break so there will be no meeting in August. We will resume our meetings after this month's meeting on 20th September. Have an enjoyable and safe summer break.

Editor: Keith Hooson