Communication

Mobile communication and GPS is becoming more commonplace in cars, this hand-out offers advice for using this technology to complement your driving. It is not exhaustive but touches on the following areas.

The technology discussed in this hand-out is:

- Satellite Navigation
- Mobile telephones
- Internet

Satellite Navigation

Many drivers now have access to satellite navigation systems which are either fitted into their vehicle, after market attachments or combined with a smart phone. When used correctly they will complement driving and can relieve the stress of route planning.

They can however be a distraction and may lead to sudden changes of direction if not used correctly. If you are using the system for directions, set the volume to a level that you can hear easily. The screens can be small and may distract concentration from other driving decisions.

In car systems will usually display a warning screen which must be accepted before use is allowed, they generally play through the cars audio system and will interrupt any other audio source. They may have voice activation and the ability to enter data via speech. Be aware that if you are doing this whilst moving you are likely to be distracted from driving.

After market systems will need to be safely secured in the vehicle, they should not obscure the drivers view but need to be visible without substantial head movement.

Care should also be taken when routing cables to ensure they do not interfere with steering or other controls. When you remove the mount, bear in mind the tell-tale ring left may be an indication to thieves that the system is in the car.

If combined with a smart phone ideally the phone should be secured in the car. All programming should be done before moving off, as using the phone whilst driving is subject to prohibitive legislation. We do not want to be the test case, in a court of law for using its navigation function.

Mobile Phones

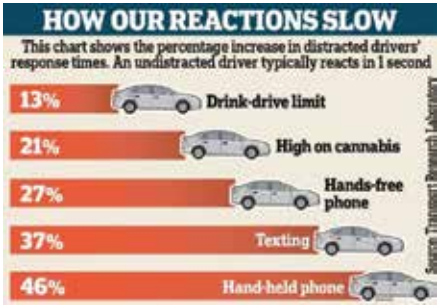
Mobile telephones have become an integral part of everyday life, often to the exclusion of sensible values. Legislation prevents the use of a hand held mobile device whilst driving unless making a call to the emergency services and it is unsafe to stop.

You are legally permitted to use hands free devices fitted to the vehicle to make and receive any calls.

It has been shown by extensive research that making calls - even hands free - substantially affects concentration and slows reactions when driving. This is a major safety concern.

The policy adopted by the IAM is to pull over safely before making or taking a call and it is suggested the driver confirms this to the caller. Emergency calls as above are excluded from the policy if it is not safe or practicable to pull over.

Good practice is to keep the phone powered up (they take a long time to restart and may be required in an emergency and other functions such as GPS tracking may be useful) but secured away from the driver. If you are utilising navigation on the phone secure it in view.



Internet

Some vehicles now have the facility to create a wi-fi zone within the vehicle to allow internet access for computers and tablets.

This is intended for use whilst parked or for the use of passengers. It is good practice, even if the passenger is going to use this, for it to be done in the rear seat. The screen can be a distraction for the driver, especially at night.

- Legislation prohibiting a TV screen from being visible to the driver specifically mentions a "cathode ray tube", but also other "cinematographic equipment". It is this second area that is likely to fit the computer screen. It is common sense not to use this whilst driving.

Ensure that any passengers using phones, computers or other electronic equipment do not distract you from your primary task of driving safely.

In Car Technology for Communication

As human beings we are not very good at multi tasking, something has to give when we try to concentrate on two things at once.

Communication devices no matter how we use them, distract us from driving.