

Last week (April 12, 2012), I discussed two aspects of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Inland Transport Committee 2010 report called *Consolidated Resolution on Road Traffic* by the Working Party on Road Traffic Safety: speed and night-time driving.

Traffic accidents, also increasingly being called traffic collisions or traffic crashes, have four basic elements: the road users, the vehicles, the road and its conditions, and environmental factors – traffic, weather, etc. The report advises that the primary aim of any traffic safety programme should be to prevent crashes involving death and serious injury as well as reducing the severity and consequences of injury. It adds that all prevention efforts should not concentrate solely on the means of directly influencing human behaviour (such as, road education classes, awareness campaigns, regulations, inspections, sanctions), but that behaviour may also be influenced by indirect means (such as, changing the layout of a road or its environment, by improving vehicle ergonomics). And, where accidents occur, injuries can be minimized by vehicle and road crash protection and the consequences of injury can be minimised by efficient emergency medical response and care.

The report suggests that some of the key elements of a road safety policy include:

- (a) Assertion of a firm political will to make achievement of road safety results an issue of national importance;
- (b) Establishing a governmental lead agency/department for road safety which can orchestrate and coordinate action on behalf of government,
- (c) Identification of problems as a result of serious evidence-based analysis and interpretation and the

potential for achieving road safety results for the medium term;

(d) Elaboration of a national strategy and action plan;

(e) Review, adoption and enforcement of the required legislation (for establishing the strategy as well as establishing the institutional competences), securing sustainable financial resource, arrangements for promotion, knowledge transfer as well as appropriate methods for monitoring and evaluating the action taken.

Item (b) has been initiated with the establishment of the National Road Safety Council of Trinidad and Tobago (NRSC).

The report suggests that the main aim of road traffic safety education should be to:

(i) instil the knowledge necessary to understand road traffic rules and for safety on the road or street;

(ii) aim at appropriate and safe behaviour in specific traffic situations; and,

(iii) develop awareness of the importance and usefulness of respecting road traffic safety rules and measures. To this end, it is important that adults set a good example for children.

Further, to be effective, the following should be included:

(i) road safety education should be provided on a systematic and continuous basis in preschool establishments, primary and secondary schools, within out-of-school activities and places of further education;

(ii) Every effort should be made to secure the active participation of children and the cooperation and participation of parents to enable them to be an integral part of the tuition process, particularly in the early ages;

(iii) sufficient time and finance should be devoted to analysing problems and developing a strategy for identifying the theme(s) for future campaigns;

(iv) campaigns should target the relevant aspects of attitudes that determine a specific type of behaviour; and,

(v) the message should be transmitted in such a way that the recipient feels concerned, or motivated to reflect and ultimately to change his behaviour;

The report emphasizes the importance of monitoring of drivers to identify, punish, and prevent dangerous driving in order to have a positive influence on the behaviour of all road users. It is recognized that very frequently the improved behaviour from monitoring only lasts as long as drivers perceive that there is a high risk of being caught, so the frequency of checks should serve as an important deterrent. Thus, road users should have the impression that they may be monitored anywhere and at any time, and this will induce them to be more vigilant and consistently observe the rules.

Driver training must include classroom and practical sessions including the following:

(a) Braking and stopping at various speeds, including stopping in an emergency if road and traffic conditions so permit;

(b) Correct positioning of the vehicle on the carriageway;

(c) Proper negotiation of right and left bends;

(d) Correct manoeuvring in changing lanes and turning at intersections;

(e) Alertness to other traffic;

(f) Correct behaviour at intersections, taking full account of all movements of other road users, with special regard to right of way;

(g) Use of rear-view mirrors;

(h) Driving with due care and consideration for pedestrians and other road users;

(i) Correct overtaking; and,

(j) Systematic collection of information well ahead, to the sides and to the rear of the vehicle.

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