

# Our Transportation System is in Crisis - 28

The purposes of a driving test in any country are: to ensure that new drivers have reached a certain minimum standard of training, and to set the standard to which instructors should aim. In 1996, the Driving Instructors Association indicated that since the 1970s the requirement for possessing a Professional Driving Instructors Permit was removed, and all that is required to be a driving instructor is three (3) years of having a driver's license. Further, anyone could enter the Transport Division and "tout" potential driving students for training, as there is no administrative structure for training and monitoring the quality of driving instructors. And there are no guidelines or conditions governing the technical or other capabilities of driving instructors. Therefore, we do not have a foolproof approach to determining the quality assurance of the product – the safe driver. In addition, there is currently no night-time driver training, yet many if not most accidents occur at nights.

Internationally, there are typically thirty-six (36) session driver training instructional programmes with video presentations and in-vehicle on-road lessons used to develop, stimulate, and exercise the driver's traffic knowledge, hazard perceptual skills (determining driving hazards and how to prepare for them), risk recognition and control skills, and procedural skills. Emphasis is placed on developing the driver's knowledge and skills in crash avoidance, especially at nights and on highways (with two or more lanes per carriageway). Special attention is given to the significance of alcohol, drugs, behaviour, and distractions as primary causes of motor vehicle crashes. Post-test feedback is encouraged from candidates, as well as promotion of post-license voluntary continuing education refresher courses. The

training is an accident prevention effort not an accident prediction effort.

There should be training and performance monitoring of our local licensed testing officers and driving instructors. Certification courses would include instructional content, methods and procedures, as well as organization and administration of driver instruction.

We need to develop a formal certified road safety course at the teacher training institutions. Experts may be invited to develop programmes for training teachers to introduce road safety education into the school curriculum so as to create appropriate inculcated behaviour at a young age. Education is long-term and concerned with the imparting of information and the development of acceptable attitudes. This contrasts with training, which is short-term and concerned with acquiring skills and the development of practical road sense.

It has been established for some time that human error plays an important part in causing accidents. Research work in UK makes a distinction between categories of human error: lapses, for example, when you approach an intersection in the wrong lane; errors, for example, when you fail to check your mirror and the side of your vehicle before making a manoeuvre, or you misjudge the speed of an oncoming vehicle; and, violations, for example, you disregard speed limits, you follow closely, you run red / amber traffic light, or you drive down the overtaking lane completely oblivious of others.

UK research work showed that violations were the primary human error related to traffic accidents. Errors and lapses arise from failures in perception, attention or judgement, while violations are to some extent deliberate. The analysis described the characteristics of

traffic violators. They found that high violators tend to:

- Be young, male and high mileage drivers,
- Consider themselves to be better drivers than others,
- Think that the bad consequences of their action will be less likely to happen and less damaging when they do,
- Believe that the other people close to them (parents, friends, etc) will be less likely to disapprove of their behaviour and that other drivers will be less upset by it,
- Be more likely to get a 'buzz' out of violating and less likely to regret doing it afterwards,
- Think that it would be more difficult to stop violating, and,
- Show greater anger directed towards others.

The study also isolated two kinds of violations: Highway Code violations, like speeding, following too closely, and passing on the shoulder or turning lane; and aggressive behaviour, like sounding your horn, cutting in front of another vehicle, changing lanes without notice, making gestures to other drivers, or racing other drivers.

The "Drive Safely Arrive Alive" campaign of the State of Hawaii, Department of Transportation in 2000 issued some advice for when confronted by an aggressive driver:

- Make every effort to get out of their way, give them room,
- Do not challenge them by speeding up or attempting to keep up,
- Wear your seat belt,
- Be prepared for any abrupt or sporadic manoeuvres by the aggressive driver.
- Avoid eye contact.
- Ignore gestures and refuse to acknowledge them.
- Report aggressive drivers to the appropriate authorities by

providing vehicle and driver description, license number, locations of incident and direction of travel.

e-mail: [lfscsystems@carib-link.net](mailto:lfscsystems@carib-link.net)