

Open Roads

Northeast

ROSPA
The Royal Society for the
Prevention of Accidents



The Newsletter of the RoSPA Advanced Drivers and Riders Northeast Group

Winter 2013

Event Calendar

Monthly Meetings

All meetings take place on the third Tuesday of every month, until November.

The venue is open from 7.30pm and meeting start about 7.45pm. The first three meetings are: 18th February, 18th March (AGM), and 15th April.

Blaydon Rugby Club,

Crow Trees,

Hexham Road,

Swalwell,

Newcastle Upon Tyne,

NE16 3BN.

<http://www.roadar-northeast.org.uk/>

Twitter: @rospa-northeast

Please see the website for details of events.

For details of upcoming external events, please also see the back page.

If you need a hard copy of this newsletter, please get in touch with the Secretary.

Dear Members,

The start of the year and it's been rather a busy past year in many respects. Lots of people have donated articles for the newsletter, for which I'm eternally grateful, and the Group (as many of you will know) had a piece published in the national 'Care on the Road' publication. This was an article on the Northumbria Blood Bikes, which some of you are involved with.

In this edition of the newsletter, I've tried to include some diversity. From a view on both winter riding and driving, through the use of electric cars for a regional taxi company, to something on winter detailing, from one of our local detailing companies.

A few news items also reached my desk over the last few weeks. Firstly, the DVLA are [re-moving paper tax disks](#) from October, M15 and M16 are to get the same [motoring exemptions](#) as the Police, the end is in sight (2015) for the [paper driving licence counterpart](#), and the Easter Egg Run for the Region [has been cancelled](#) due to police budget cuts.

Finally, the worshipful and youthful scamp (well, you'll say that youthfulness when you see his new car—picture below) Professor Muter has written a 'view from the Regional Senior Examiner' (or Gossip from the auld g** as Jim puts it)

Graham Moor
(secretary@roadar-northeast.org.uk)

Chairman's Foreword

It has been a successful year for the group in terms of new members joining and starting training and that is largely down to the efforts of the key volunteers in our group. I'd like to say a big thank-you on behalf of the group to Doreen, our driver-training co-ordinator, to Dave, our bike-training co-ordinator, to Lynne our membership administrator, to Training Officer Ray for coordinating tutors and to Graham for his enthusiastic contributions as Secretary, as well as compiling several good newsletters this year.

If anyone is able to spare some time to contribute to any aspect of the running of the group, please speak to, email or phone any of the committee members to let them know.

Our last meeting of 2013 saw one of our members Keith, deliver a presentation on driving in adverse weather based on Ray's earlier work. As well as reminding us of the extra preparation needed for the likely bad weather ahead, it was another opportunity to consider the merits of winter tyres. For our rider members, Dave mentioned a number of bike-specific issues to be considered to round-up the discussion. RoSPA has some general information about winter driving on their website at <http://www.rospace.com/wintersafety>

On a wider note, RoADAR has now appointed a new chief examiner to replace Bob Smalley who stepped-down recently. The new chief examiner Stuart MacMillan, is a former police inspector who was a driving and riding instructor with West Mercia.

We also have a new Groups Advisory Panel (GAP) representative for RoADAR's North East of England region. His name is Geoff Blackburn from the East Riding of Yorkshire group, and he is a motorcyclist.

Next year we want to ensure that ongoing tutor development is an integral part of the group's activities, so if you are a tutor ... there will be opportunities for discussing and sharing best-practice with other tutors.

We'll try to make that something to look forward to !

Best wishes for a safe and prosperous 2014.

John Ennis, Chair, RoADAR-Northeast

Winter Riding

Although every year we have a talk at one of the monthly meetings about winter driving this year is the first that I have had a chat about Winter Riding or should we say Bad weather riding as the weather at anytime of the year can be challenging when on a motorcycle. One of the first things you should be asking yourself in any bad weather condition is do I need to be riding a motorcycle in this weather.

What alternatives do I have?

Now if we are sitting in the house we could take some other form of transport if we thought it was too dangerous to be on the motorcycle. However, if we were already out on the motorcycle I think it would be really hard to leave it somewhere else and get home on a different way. In case we do get caught out in bad weather the vehicle should be in good working order, we should be dressed for the same environment. As with any kind of transport it will need to be reliable, as with any vehicle it's important to have a service carried out if you intend to ride it through the winter. All levels topped up and correct anti-freeze where it's needed, tyres and drive in good condition all lights working, and don't forget about you.

Riding in bad weather has its problems, so check out the weather forecast before setting off. Wear clothing to suit the weather. I know that leather is said to be the best material for use in motorcycle clothing, and I have seen information giving advice as to the wearing a one-piece leather suit in the winter as it stops wind getting in, but as the temperature drops I think the man-made materials would be more beneficial. Leather doesn't have good thermal protection and in the rain will become soaked, all of which can lower the body temperature. I know we could wear thermals under the leather and a water proof suit over it but normally leathers are close fitting and I don't know how many layers I could wear before I wouldn't be able to move. Similarly once I have put on a water proof suit how restricted will my movement be.

The man-made material clothing is different in its fit. Looser fitting, it gives more room for wearing thermal layers as well as having its own thermal lining and waterproof membrane built in. Although it can also become soaked in heavy rain it will not take as long to dry out as leather. Also we must not forget our hands and feet, as these areas can make a big difference to our concentration and riding control. Now think back to any riding you have done during cold weather, did you ever get off your motorcycle with cold hands, feet or shivering from the cold. In cold weather your body will shut down the blood supply to your extremities, maintaining the core temperature of your body. As hands and feet become colder our concentration turns from the riding task to, "I wish I was in front of the fire right now", "my toes are killing me I don't know if I'll be able to stand when I come to a stop", "don't know if I can pull that lever in". If we keep riding for long periods, we could ride ourselves into the early stages of hyperthermia. Take regular breaks, get warmed, and don't think just a little bit further, that's when the concentration fade could turn

in to an accident.

So what temperature is dangerous to you?

It's more dramatic if we talk in Fahrenheit, 0^of ambient temperature at 60mph the wind chill would be -33^of, cold enough to cause frostbite in 10 minutes. However, that would equate to -36^oc. I don't think any of us would be out at that temperature. But at 5^oc ambient temperature at 60 mph the wind chill will bring down the temperature to -3^oc, now this might not sound too bad but you will feel the effect of the cold on your fingers and toes, maybe not enough to cause frostbite but a milder form frost-nip on exposed skin, all of which will detract from your concentration. This is why it is important to wear the correct clothing for the weather that you are going to be riding in. The bad weather that can affect us can be at any time of the year not just in the winter.

Rain

Lets imagine that we are cocooned in are suit of invincibility, fully water proofed up, full face helmet, gloves and boots. Now let's remind are selves of how hard it can be to see through a steamed up or rain covered visor. You can clear your vision, just by removing the visor from you view but that will leave you very vulnerable to injury to your face and eyes. It would be better to open the visor about the width of your thumb between the visor and the chin bar to allow a flow of air to pass over the visor allowing it to clear. There are many different solutions on the market that will stop your visor from steaming up (so they say) but from my experience the best thing I have come across is the pin lock system. This is like a double glazing for your visor which should stay clear where the inner visor is in contact with the main visor.

Keeping the outside of the visor clear of rain can be a problem as we don't have wipers like a car. However, you can get a blade either fitted in to a glove or one that fits around your finger. It is important to keep the visor clean and free from scratches. The scratches will hold the water in place not allowing it to clear which will distort your vision and dissipate light.

Riding in the rain does change our riding a little bit, the two second rule is doubled to give us a safe gap and talking of safe gaps we'll need extra distance when pulling out of a side road in either direction. We tend to be a little bit more cautious when the road surface is wet, remembering that the bit of rubber that makes contact with the road is only the size of your palm. However, if your tyres are in good condition with a good depth of tread you should be ok and the only way to get better is to ride in the rain. What we can do to help ourselves is to look out for things that could be a problem for two wheeled vehicle like, white paint, tar banding, worn/shiny road surface, metal covers, diesel/oil/petrol and not to forget wet leaves all will become very slippery when wet. Other problems come in the form of standing or flowing water on the road. If you come across standing water on the road check out where the other vehicles have driven. Keeping to the tyre tracks of the vehicle in front isn't a bad idea, ideally in the track nearest the crown of the road if it is safe. You can also make sure

that the track doesn't run in to any danger by watching the vehicle in front. Where the water is deeper and you don't have another vehicle to follow it would be worthwhile to find out how deep it is, maybe even walk through carefully, checking for any holes before you commit the motorcycle to the water. Just like any other vehicle if the water comes up to the air intake you will suck water in to the engine and that won't be pretty, so checking the depth can be important. Keep the motorcycle moving as fast as is necessary to maintain the balance with the revs set high so not to allow water to enter the engine via the exhaust.

Flowing water such as fords and flood waters can be very dangerous, it can take as little as six inches of fast flowing water to sweep a person off their feet and 12 inches could move a car. From my experience being in fast flowing water without the right equipment on is extremely dangerous. Always check the depth at fords but still take care even when there isn't much depth of water its usually slippery underfoot. Don't forget to check the brakes once you have cleared the water.

Wind

It's one of those things you can't see and it's not always constant in its strength. What you can do is feel and see the effect of the wind, from trees swaying to rubbish swirling and other vehicles being moved by the wind. You can anticipate where you may come across wind on your journey. Cross winds when passing a large vehicle or the an open area on a road the is elevated and don't forget the old back to back houses which have street after street where the wind will blow through the opening of the street then give you a rest from the wind in the lee of the building. You can plan your ride if you recognise these areas and position you motorcycle to counteract the effect of the wind. However, you must always be on your guard for gusts of wind which cannot be predicted and which could move you over several lanes before you can control it or worse still take you off you motorcycle. As with any weather check the forecast. At present the forecast is for arctic wind which will be strong in force, so thinking back to the temperature we talked about what will the wind chill factor be and is you gear up to the task.

Fog and Mist

One little joke from my old gaffer (when the fog has gone will it be mist). Riding in Fog/ Mist can be disorientating with loss of vision and sounds being muffled. Using you dipped headlights is a must and if fitted use of the rear fog lights. Your vision can be impaired by the density of the fog which may vary considerably from seeing over several hundred metres to not being able to see the vehicle in front of you. Your visor can become covered in fine droplets which can go unnoticed and in freezing fog can freeze quickly making it impossible to see, when you will have to stop to clear it. It is important not to just follow the lights of the vehicle in front you, but to look for any indication of the roads direction e.g. white lines, cats eyes and street lamps. In this environment you become very vulnerable, if you can't

see the road what can the other road users see, possibly not you. Over the years we have seen time after time people crashing in fog, so again check the forecast, do you need to be riding in it.

Snow / Ice

It's not impossible to ride on snow and ice if you have the correct gear, I have seen videos of the Norwegian army on motorcycles with studded tyres and what looks like two runner skies fitted from quite high up on the motorcycle frame to almost touching the ground. As we don't tend to have snow like they do I wouldn't expect anyone to have a setup like that. There are some devices that can be fitted to motorcycle tyres for riding in the snow, such as snow chains, snow claws and zip grip go but you would have to be dedicated to motorcycling a little bit above the norm. Ideally checking the forecast would be a good start and if you have an alternative means of transport I would use it. If you haven't got an alternative or you have been caught out by a snow fall, like I said earlier it's not impossible to ride in the snow. There are theories on how to ride in the snow. My own method and what I have been telling my Learner rides for the last 20 years or so is to ride on the compressed snow made by other vehicles, this will give you an idea of any deformities in the road surface which could be from debris or a hole. It allows the tyres to ride over the snow without sinking in too far. Ride as fast as you need to balance the motorcycle but slow enough to be able to stop when needed. Another way, which I don't subscribe to, is to ride on the freshly fallen snow as it will give you more grip as the tyre sinks in to the snow and you won't be on the compacted snow which may turn to ice as it's compacted. For me it's the profile of the motorcycle tyre. If you ride through sand or gravel you cannot guarantee in which direction the wheel will sink through the substance, similarly if riding through freshly fallen snow the tyre should act in the same way as sand or gravel. If you do decide to venture out in the snow think about the temperature and what could make you become cold, wind chill, falling snow or snow building up on you as you ride.

Now for something a little bit different—Sun and heat

The winter sun is always a problem not just for riders but for everyone, its low in the sky and it doesn't matter what you're riding or driving it can be blinding. It may conceal you on your motorcycle from the vehicle pulling out of the side road or even the other vehicle from you as you pull out. It might on be the direct sunlight but the light reflecting of the road surface. There not much you can do about the sun other than some kind of a shade, this could be wearing sun glasses or with a lot of helmets now a sun visor. Slow down give yourself a chance to see what's happening, don't commit to pulling out until you are sure. Remember just because the sun is shining it doesn't mean it's warm or even above 0°C.

The summer sun has a different set of problems. There is a lot more motorcycles out on the road which may increase the chance of an accident, people riding their motorcycle after a winter break without getting used to it before riding on those lovely dry

roads that now have potholes dotted all over. As we have talk a lot about cold weather riding and having the right clothing for the weather, the same applies for the summer. Do you need to have the thermal linings left in your gear, are the glove too thick and hot, is my body starting to overheat becoming de-hydrated which can cause concentration fade. Take regular breaks taking in fluids and cooling down. One thing we must remember when riding in the summer sun is to stay safe wear the correct clothing for the summer, don't just discard it because it's too hot. It doesn't take much to take skin off if you fall from a motorcycle, check out the road rash queen if you want to know what can happen.

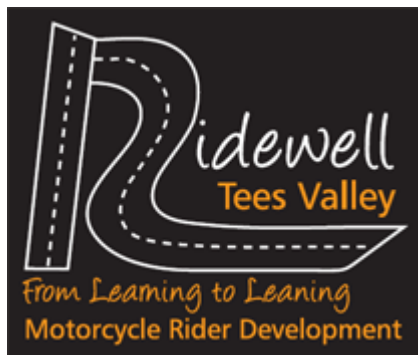
The above are my thoughts if you have your own thoughts about what you have read please send in a reply. I would like to hear what you have to say and discuss any differences.

Dave Summers, Rider Training Coordinator

www.ridewellteesvalley.co.uk

You've got a full licence...so what's it all about then..... Ridewell have 2 Post-Test instructors who are well known throughout the region having recently retired as full time Police riders. Both Instructors have been involved in the former 'Handle it or Lose it' programme since its development in 2005, and are now in a position to commit more time to continue their passion for passing on their skills & experience to assist in helping your riding become more fluid, increasing forward planning and observation skills and formulating riding plans that will assist with improving cornering and overtaking. They offer everything from a 1 day session to a full 4 day programme and will always pitch their instruction to your existing skill level. They'll never take you out of your comfort zone, but there is no doubt that will increase as you go through the experience. They never ride with more than 2 clients to 1 Instructor, and their initial recommendation is for a 2 day session. That way, the skills you learn on day 1 can be progressed and developed as you put them into practice on day 2.

If you wish to progress your rider training to a higher level, contact Nick Walker at **motorcycle.training@stockton.gov.uk** or call on 01642 526732 or 07920 750651



Winter Detailing

Darker nights and dropping temperatures, all signs that winter is fast approaching. Every Year detailers and car lovers alike start to protect their pride and joy against the harsh conditions that winter brings, some of the worst being salt, grit and ice. Although the “winter protection” is not essential for a well detailed car, the fact our cars are probably one of the biggest purchases we are likely to make and it is important to look after them, not only cosmetically, but to protect the bodywork and other components against rust. A wise man or woman once said “Prevention is better than the cure”.

The Wheels:

Ideally pre rinse with a jet wash to remove any loose dirt or grime. Spray with a wheel cleaner to remove any more stubborn deposits. Leave the product to dwell for the stated time and agitate with a wheel brush or designated wheel mitt (not a mitt that you will use on the bodywork) then rinse.

Juicy Tip:

For a full wheel detail, I like using either Car Pro Iron X or Bilt Hamber Auto Wheel which is designed to remove any really stubborn brake dust or iron fallout. This will remove any wax or sealant applied to the wheel, which will need re-applying.



The Bodywork

You would wash the bodywork in the same way you would during the rest of the year, except take more care and attention as the amount and the type of dirt will be different! We want to remove as much of this as possible without coming into contact with the paintwork.

Pre-Wash—Snow Foam

Start by jet washing the car to remove any loose particles off the paintwork and inside the wheel arches. Ideally snow foam the vehicle and leave for approximately 5 – 10mins to dwell and let the bubbles do their magic!! Don't let the product dry onto the paint surface. If you don't have access to a jet wash or snow foam lance, you can also pre wash the vehicle with a designated product like Valet Pro Citrus Pre Wash – Simply dilute the product to desired strength – normally 1:6 for heavily soiled areas, then spray the vehicle and wheel arches leave to dwell then rinse.



Juicy Tip:

Invest in a small detailing brush to get the dirt from the annoying harder to reach places like around the badges or front and rear grilles.

Washing Stage:

I will assume at this stage we're all practicing a good wash regime with the "two bucket method" (TBM) and a good wash mitt? The "Washing Stage" of detailing a car is at its most basic, but any good detailer will say it's the most important part of maintaining a swirl free paint finish, and even more important to be practised during the winter months, despite the urge to cut corners when it is cold outside. The key here is to have a good shampoo to lift and lubricate the dirt with a good clean Lamb's wool wash mitt. Using the two bucket wash method wash the vehicle from top to bottom rinsing the wash mitt often to remove any dirt caught up in the mitt.





When drying the vehicle “pat” the vehicle dry using a good quality microfiber drying towel. Do not rub the panels as any contaminants still bonded to the paint surface may cause swirl marks or scratches!

Juicy Tip

When washing the vehicle, wash less with one pass and be prepared to replace the rinse water more often to reduce the risk of causing any swirl marks or imperfections in the paintwork.

Decontaminating the paintwork:

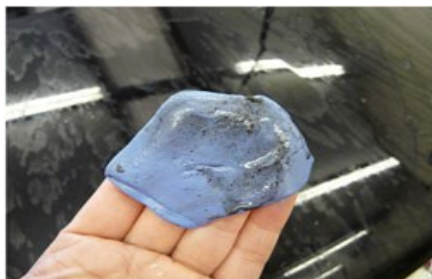
This is not an essential part of the winter protection - but by removing ALL the microscopic particles like iron fallout, tree sap and tar deposits that are contaminating the paintwork, you will give your sealant or wax (LSP) an ultra-smooth surface to bond too, which will lengthen the durability and protection of your chosen wax or sealant – also known as Last Stage Product (LSP). There are a number of products available for removing paint defects mentioned above like ValetPRO glue and tar remover and Iron X, but probably the best solution to this is “claying” the vehicle.

Claying

Start by working your clay to the size of the palm of your hand, it should stick to your palm

and be close to body temperature. Apply a generous amount of clay lube to the panel and using light pressure, move the clay back and forth. At first you should feel a very light friction/resistance from the contaminants but then eventually all the friction will go and the panel will smooth to touch (too much resistance may indicate the panel is too dry) – **remember not to let the panel go dry**, your better to apply too much clay lube rather than not enough. As your clay collects the fallout from the paint surface you will notice particles and dirt to the face of the clay – Gently fold the clay in on itself working it so the clay is clean again. Repeat this process around the rest of the car, as the clay picks up more contaminants it may need replacing with fresh piece although a standard 55g bar should be enough to do a whole average size car. After claying the whole vehicle repeat the wash and dry stage You may notice slight

“marring” of the paintwork caused by the claying (either applied too much pressure or not enough lube) – this is normal and nothing a good pre wax cleanser won’t fix. A Juicy favourite is LIME PRIME - apply using a microfiber with light to medium pressure one panel at a time until the polish is “worked in” the buff off with a clean microfiber.



Final Stage

The final stage for the winter protection is sealing the paintwork. The two most common ways to do this would be a wax or a sealant. The purpose for either of these products is to bond a hard microscopic layer to the surface of the clear coat protecting it against grit, salt and all the other contaminants mentioned above. There are numerous products available and personal preference plays a big part but if you’re choosing a wax – chose a hard wax which is more durable and layer up! (2-3 coats ideally) or if you have both wax and a sealant apply the sealant first the wax on top. A couple of our favourite last stage products (LSP) for the winter months would be Chemical Guys Jetseal 109, Dodo Juice Super Hybrid or the Collinite waxes.

Windscreen and windows

During the winter months we will see a lot of rain, sleet and snow. Anything we can do to improve visibility during this time is very important. One thing we can do to improve this is to seal the windscreen with a specially formulated product. These include Juicy favourites, Chemical Guys Rain Off or CARPRO Flyby30. Both are very easy to apply and can seriously improve visibility keeping you safe on the road.



Eco Cars and the Taxi Industry

In today's business world "being Green" is something which most businesses are desperate to prove. Major businesses have moved into the North East in the past two years and the region's 'green' reputation has certainly helped attract new business to the region, creating jobs and opportunities for local businesses to join these new companies growing supply chain. Therefore in 2010 I decided to investigate the potential of the soon to be released vehicles that ran solely on electricity. As a taxi firm, many of our business clients have demanded low carbon vehicles to satisfy their own carbon cutting agendas - which was the main force behind our decision to switch our fleet to Liquid Petroleum Gas (LPG) in 2006. The switch to LPG had shown us the cost saving benefit to petrol and diesel alternatives and Electric Vehicles (EV's) seem like the logical next step.

To begin with the chances of EV's being viable cars for private motorists, let alone a taxi. The initial range of 80 odd miles and needing 4-6 hours seemed unworkable. However the government offered (and continue to offer) £5,000 towards the cost of the car which makes them affordable considering the high specification and attractive appearance of the vehicles. After doing extensive research we decided to take an EV on trial for 6 months to examine the practicalities of driving an electric vehicle.

Our findings were incredible, not only were the cars reliable, powerful and comfortable but we saved over £1,400 in the 6 months on fuel. We used the vehicle for transporting staff and business runs for trips. In addition we used the bus for coach drivers taking over routes. The savings were incredible and convinced us that EV's could become viable taxis. A normal taxi driver in a week will spend up to £150 on fuel so if that cost could be reduced to £13 a week for five full EV charge sessions (500 miles) the cost savings would be incredible.

After discussions with Nissan they offered generous financial support for each Nissan LEAF purchased we took on our first LEAF and have not looked back. Not only does the LEAF save thousands a year in fuel costs, it's a fantastic car to drive. The vehicle is spacious and comfortable, with fantastic boot space. Bluetooth and a touch screen display give you every possible detail you need to know about the vehicle including crucial sat nav information about available charge posts in your area. Like all EV's & Hybrid's the vehicles have an automatic transmission and are simply easy to drive. The LEAF is deceptively powerful and helpfully includes an 'eco' mode which saves battery life in exchange for the acceleration you'd want when hitting the dual carriage way.

A taxi firm with vehicles that emit no carbon is a great selling point to business clients, but the vehicles have also proved extremely popular with taxi drivers who enjoy the comfortable surroundings the vehicle provides and the vehicles excellent performance. With no combustion engine to service, the only cost regarding maintenance are the tyres, brakes & steering.

With grants being received by the region's major Local Authorities, rapid charge points will soon be in place across the North East which allow you to charge an EV in 20 minutes. Quite simply I believe zero carbon vehicles are the future of my company and the future of the car industry. We already have requests from customers who only want to be driven in an EV or Hybrid (we have 30 Hybrid vehicles on our fleet too) and online booking facility which allows customers to select an EV car when they book online.

We currently have 180 vehicles on our growing taxi and coach fleet and low carbon vehicles already make up around 40 of those. Hopefully this figure will double in 2014 and no doubt you'll see a lot more low carbon vehicles on our roads.

Taxi Driving and Advanced Driving Qualifications:

When I found out that I needed my Advanced Driving Qualification to get a taxi license for Northumberland County Council I considered writing a letter of complaint to the Committee in charge of such matters and taking the Council to court to make them overturn the decision. I'm happy to say as an Advanced Driver who passed with a Gold Standard that I've never been more wrong about anything in my whole life.

The council introduced the idea in 2009 that if a driver had held a license for less than four years then an Advanced Driving Qualification had to be attained from ROSPA in order to acquire a taxi license - due to a lack of driving experience. What I disagreed most with was the fact people I knew had held a driving license for 7 years, and sat behind the wheel twice in the time since whereas I had been on the road driving every single day almost, since I passed my test over a year ago.

I hadn't heard of Advanced Driving, or had any idea what it entailed. I presumed it to be another bog standard driving test and I couldn't see it helping me taxi driving in any way. How wrong I was.

I was fortunate enough to be taught by Richard Bishop who not only was a superb teacher in helping me come to terms with Advanced Driving, he also changed my attitude to driving. The first few lessons were enjoyable but I still found myself questioning why Advanced Driving would be relevant for a taxi driver. Many taxi drivers find themselves on the road 50-60 hours each week and I thought that Advanced Driving seemed all well and good on your daily drive to work, but chasing a fare that had booked half an hour a go and trying to get there in double quick time wasn't really applicable to Advanced Driving. I couldn't have been more wrong.

Taxi drivers experience every day what you will experience once every couple of weeks. As owner of a company with a 180 car fleet, I only find myself driving to help out when we struggle with demand (which is a fair bit these days, fortunately) or on busy Saturdays - but I still know what doing an 11 hour shift feels like. A normal mo-

torist will have one of those days where everyone pulls out in front of you, every other driver seems to switch into your line without looking or sometimes other drivers will just behave in a manner which shocks you to the extent that you believe the other driver to have no regard for you are their safety. Every day is like that for a taxi driver. Frustration is part of the job. We've all seen taxi drivers seemingly act ridiculously over the top towards other drivers and sometimes they are down right rude (obviously I'm not talking about Phoenix drivers here but the competition). What you probably don't realise is that that taxi driver has had 15 people cut him up that day. I'm not excusing the driver, just offering an insight into the daily life of a taxi driver.

What Advanced Driving taught me was to see the problems coming, to predict the bad behaviour of other motorists and to change my driving to reduce the chances of accidents occurring. It's no exaggeration to say that Advanced Driving has helped me avoid serious accidents when driving a taxi. Fortunately on one occasion I beeped my horn in warning when a driver was pulling out onto a national speed limit single carriage way road, the driver hadn't made eye contact and I covered the horn just in case. It sounds like a minute thing to do but it's an advanced driving technique I learnt from Richard and it may have avoided serious injury for me and the other driver.

When I first started to practising reversing around 2 corners in my lessons I wondered how it would ever come into practice in the real world. Taxi driving I do around 3 a shift! Advanced Driving techniques involved regarding being aware of pedestrians, cyclists and children are crucial to their and my safety.

Advanced Driving couldn't be more relevant to my driving expiries as a taxi driver and as a result I plan to introduce as many drivers as possible to it over the coming years.



Why Should I Fit Winter Tyres?

Improved grip, thanks to special rubber mix

Improved protection against aquaplaning, thanks to wider, deeper grooves and sipes

Improved handling – lateral forces

Improved braking and acceleration

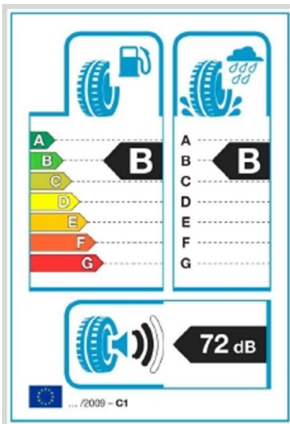
I've fitted a full set to my Fiesta, and to my wife's Suzuki Swift. In both cases, the total cost of the tyres and new steel wheels was £350 ish. I shopped around and got mine from mytyres.co.uk. No I don't get commission! I chose to have them delivered to my home address so I could fit them when I decided the weather had gone past being nice! The summer tyres & wheels are now sitting in the garage (lying flat, one on top of the other). You may prefer to get the tyre retailer to fit them – but you'll need to consider where to store your summer tyres & wheels. Some garages offer storage – some free, some a modest charge. But it's worth doing! The criteria is to identify when typical average temperatures are around the 7°C level. It is at 7°C and below is when winter tyres outperform summer tyres. Ask drivers what's the single thing that worries them with winter looming?

Fear of skidding is likely to be top concern, yet very few drivers choose to fit them. Long queues and hold-ups in snowy, icy conditions can often be attributed to driver's inability to pull away from a junction, into a roundabout etc., due to the poor grip offered by their summer tyres! In recent tests, driving at 30mph on ice, a car with regular tyres stopped in 43 metres, whilst the stopping distance with winter tyres was only 35 metres – that's a difference of 8 metres (8 ½ yards in old money) – that's just over the length of 2 Ford Fiestas. That's 8 metres that can hold the child / tree / truck / car or brick wall that you will or won't hit... depending on the tyres you've got! It is recommended to buy winter tyres in late October when the weather begins to get colder. The elasticity of summer tyres begins to diminish severely at temperatures below 7°C, thus reducing road contact and therefore lengthening braking time and distance.

Winter tyres, on the other hand, consist of a special rubber compound with high levels of silicon or natural rubber that hold their elasticity under cold conditions. Especially on wet or icy or snowy roads, winter tyres provide much better adhesion due to their deeper tread pattern which contain thousands of fine jagged slits (sipes) and they will always out-perform summer tyres when it comes to braking, steering and accelerating. In a recent AutoExpress test of winter tyres, they compared handling, braking and other criteria. All the winter tyres tested gave overall results of 90 to 95% or so. They looked at the results for the same criteria from test of summer tyres earlier in the year. The best tyre in that test only performed at around 70% in this test! Furthermore the consequences of driving with summer tyres in wintry conditions should not be underestimated. If an accident occurs where you are at fault, there may be insurance issues that have to be resolved by you not having the correct tyres fitted.

Advice is to fit full set of winter tyres at the same time. Fitting just two winter tyres to the front will significantly increase the likelihood of over steer (where the back end of the car takes a wide, sliding route around a bend then you end up in a ditch, wrapped round a tree or under a truck). This is the tread pattern of a typical winter tyre, with thousands of sipes – those little jagged cuts you can see on the tread blocks to help grip. Tread depth is typically 8 – 9mm when new, compared to 7 – 8mm with new summer tyre.

All tyres are a compromise. Our weather / climate fluctuates enormously and, whilst slick/bald tyres will offer best grip in completely dry situations, they'd be lethal with the first patch of wet road. Similarly, winter tyres aren't offering best performance in the 'summer'. However, winter tyres outperform summer tyres so significantly in all conditions at 7°C or less, they work much better than summer tyres in the cold, wet, icy and snowy months.



What about snow socks or snow chains? As their names suggest, these accessories are for when you're really in trouble in snow. As such they are really a temporary aid until you get on a decent road surface. The snow socks will disintegrate very quickly when you're off the snow, and proper metal snow chains will have you all over the place on tarmac. There are rubberised chains which may be of some use away from the snow, but in both cases, you'll have to stop, fit them to the driving wheels, then, when you are on a better surface, stop the car again to take them off and pack them in the boot. Not convenient – or safe -at all - but can save the day if you're really stuck, of course.

Studded tyres are fitted with metal studs for additional traction on icy roads. Studs should only be used on packed ice or snow as their use on the road surface would cause damage and therefore be prohibited.

Here are some links to information, videos etc from the internet that make interesting reading. I have sourced these videos myself and in good faith and believe they provide you with sound and relevant information, but please note I have no commercial

or other interest in these sites nor can I be held responsible for such third party content. Similarly, this contribution is not endorsed by or otherwise associated with RoSPA.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nRa-Jax-EN0&feature=related>
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FKEdKHZJtRg&feature=rellist&playnext=1&list=PLDBB06FC44262FEAC>
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eIP_34ltdWI&feature=fvwrel
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JGfvyPtYR0Y>
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dc2GRL8CQdE>

One last, brief video. Probably the most important one. It's about clearing your car before driving off. Make sure you watch it to the end.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dcNrh8FL3vE>

News from the Regional Senior Examiner

On 12th December, the Regional Senior Examiners (RSE) meeting was held at RoSPA HQ in Birmingham. Amongst the output from the meeting are a few news items. Firstly, Stuart, the Chief Examiner, is writing a new version of the test guidelines which may have different content for the public compared to that of members. He is also to create a structured training plan for all tutors and advanced tutors

The motorcycle test is to have an addition of slow speed control as the criteria, and that the debrief should have an allocated time to it (the test itself should last 45-75 minutes). There had been some discussion about motorcycle examiners would need to become part of a register of post-test trainers, but the DSA is not aware of any such thing being compulsory.

Finally, there was a discussion on the number of examiners in post, and how these were combining testing with group issues. Stuart is of the opinion that as long as the two areas of practice remain apart, this should be fine. As far as examiner numbers, only certain areas have low numbers. If anybody wishes to become an examiner, Stuart is the first point of contact.



Contact Details

Website <http://www.roadar-northeast.org.uk>

Twitter: @rospa-northeast

Facebook: RoADAR Northeast

Current Committee

Ray Forsyth - Training Officer (training.officer for email)

Doreen Elvin - Driver Training (driver.training for email)

Dave Summers - Rider Training (rider.training for email)

Lynne Wood Forsyth - Membership

Graham Moor - Secretary

Lynne Wood Forsyth - Treasurer

John Ennis - Chairman

All email addressed are role@roadar-northeast.org.uk

Meeting Venue

Third Tuesday of the Month @ 7.30pm

Blaydon Rugby Club

Crow Trees

Hexham Road

Swalwell

Newcastle Upon Tyne

NE16 3BN

Directions

From A1 travelling North :

Leave the A1 at the Swalwell B6317 exit and follow the slip road to the roundabout, go right, 3rd exit. Follow the road ahead through the traffic lights and through the next right bend, the club is after the bend on the left.

From A1 travelling South :

After going over the river Tyne leave the A1 at the Consett A694 exit. At the first roundabout go right to Consett, 3rd exit. Follow the road back under the A1. At the next small roundabout go left, 1st exit, and follow the road to the next left bend - the club is before the bend on the right.

The Club is clearly signposted on Hexham Road.