

‘Eco-safe driving’ and the Environment Changes to the ADI Test of Driving Ability

We all recognise that transport is an essential part of our lives and most of us also recognise that the environmental consequences of driving are immense. The emissions produced by vehicles cause damage to the environment. Vehicle manufacturers are devoting time, effort and money developing technology that will ensure that vehicles become more environmentally friendly.

But those of us who drive can also help by amending our driving style to one that uses less fuel, and as a result produces less polluting chemicals. And of course the less fuel we use the more money we can save ourselves!

Over the last year or so Driving Standards Agency has invested a great deal of time and effort in developing the principles of ‘Eco-safe driving’. During the process we looked at the following areas, and these have now been included in the revised style of driving:-

- Enhanced hazard perception and awareness skills
- Selective use of gears
- Progressive use of accelerator
- Compliance with speed limits
- Utilisation of engine braking/torque
- Use of cruise control

To enable this work to progress we installed a sophisticated fuel monitoring device in several vehicles which allowed us to monitor and compare fuel used when a variety of driving styles were used by different drivers.

We also considered other issues such as:-

- Parking
- Carrying unnecessary weight
- Route planning
- etc

The recently published version of ‘Driving – the essential skills’ has an entire chapter on ‘Eco-safe driving’ and you will find much more information there. There is also a chapter on ‘Avoiding congestion’.

You may already use some of the techniques when you are driving, but we found that even the most experienced driver can benefit from further development.

If you adopt your driving to include these changes you will become a more environmentally friendly, economically aware driver and may enjoy your journeys more as they become less stressful and more comfortable.

However, although it is good to be aware of environmental issues and save fuel it is even more important that you do not compromise your safety and that of other road users while you are doing so. At all times you should be prepared to adapt to changing conditions and it may be that you have to sacrifice fuel saving for safety.

We have conducted a number of trials of this revised style using drivers of different levels of experience, ranging from novices to experts. Across that range we have demonstrated that savings can be achieved between 5% and 17%, (averaging 8.5%) in fuel used, and as a consequence a reduction in the volume of atmosphere polluting chemicals produced. As a general rule of thumb it is fair to say that the less experienced drivers are able to demonstrate greater savings.

In an attempt to allow a wider audience to experience 'Eco-safe driving' we invited a number of representatives from the ADI Consultative Groups to Cardington.

Following that, Mike Barrett, Business Development Manager, Automobile Association, said 'A number of instructors have already adapted to this style, in their own driving, and report substantial savings in reduced fuel costs'. Eddie Barnaville, Driving Instructors Association, reported in an article in 'Driving Instructor', 'Over the 16km drive on the 2nd run, not only did I average 2 or 3 mph faster, saving one and half minutes, but more importantly I saved 10% on my fuel bill'.

It is probably fair to say that some representatives arrived to take part in the demonstration with a cynical view of 'Eco-safe driving'. But by the end of the day they had been converted and in all cases were able to show a saving in fuel used.

The EU 3rd Directive on Driving Licences, (Draft), contains a proposal that all licence acquisition driving tests, (excluding category B) will contain an element that considers the environmental driving of the candidate. Although category B is currently excluded, there is no guarantee that this will remain so and we should all be prepared for what may happen in the future.

Ultimately we would like to see all driving instructors taking on board the principles of 'Eco-safe driving' and introducing them into new-driver training. This should lead to a group of drivers who from day-one drive in an environmentally friendly way.

Approved Driving Instructors Register – Test of Driving Ability – Part 2

Therefore, as from 1st October 2005, a slight change will be made to the Approved Driving Instructor 'Test of Driving Ability' (part 2) qualifying examination, to reflect the increased awareness and need for economically/environmentally friendly driving. An assessment will be made of the candidates' ability to drive in a way that demonstrates recognition of the principles of 'Eco-safe driving'.

The following table sets out the areas of the candidates driving which will be considered against 'Eco-safe driving' and what will be considered satisfactory or unsatisfactory.

| Topic | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory |
|-------------------------------------|---|--|
| Hazard Awareness/ Planning | Identifies hazards in a timely manner allowing adequate time to respond. As a result braking and acceleration are smooth and progressive. | Consistently fails to identify hazards in a timely manner and as a result braking and acceleration is rushed and harsh. |
| Compliance with Speed limits | Complies with all posted and national speed limits. Ensures that speed is always appropriate to road, traffic and weather conditions. | Consistently fails to comply with posted and national speed limits. Drives too quickly for prevailing road, traffic and weather conditions. |
| Starting and moving away | Starts engine without excessive use of accelerator. Moves away from stops smoothly. | Consistently uses excessive accelerator when starting engine. Moves away from stops harshly – too quickly for conditions |
| Use of accelerator | Uses the accelerator during in normal driving in a smooth manner, co-ordinated with other controls. Demonstrates good acceleration sense. | Consistently uses the accelerator during normal driving harshly. As a result progress is made in such a way as to produce an uncomfortable ride. The stability of the vehicle is affected |
| Gear selection | Uses gears sensibly and efficiently. The vehicle is always travelling in an appropriate gear for road and traffic conditions. Uses gears selectively (up and down) and selects highest suitable gear as soon as possible, without causing engine to labour. | Consistently fails to use gears effectively and efficiently. Selects inappropriate gears and does not use selective gear selection. Causes engine to over rev or labour due to inappropriate selection. |
| Engine braking | Takes advantage of the effects of engine braking when appropriate. | Consistently fails to use engine braking – showing an over-reliance on brakes to slow the vehicle. |
| Engine power/torque | Takes advantage of the power/torque characteristics of a modern engine. Utilizes higher gears at lower engine speeds, when negotiating hazards, without causing engine to labour. | Consistently fails to take advantage of power/torque characteristics of a modern engine. Uses lower gears unnecessarily, not recognizing, when negotiating hazards, that a higher gear may be appropriate. |
| Use of cruise control (when fitted) | Uses cruise control in situations where it would be appropriate – without compromising road safety. | Consistently fails to use cruise control appropriately. |

A driver who demonstrates a 'satisfactory' assessment in each topic area will use less fuel, and release less polluting chemicals into the atmosphere, than a driver who drives to an 'unsatisfactory' standard.

At the moment it is proposed that no matter how 'unsatisfactory' the 'Eco-safe driving' of the candidate is, no more than one driving fault will be recorded against that heading. This will be reviewed as time goes by. However, although a fault will not necessarily be recorded against 'Eco-safe driving' it may be that a fault, assessed as 'driving', 'serious' or 'dangerous', could be recorded against a different subject heading on the ADI Part 2 Driving Test Report, i.e. item 12 Control – gears, item 26 Awareness/planning.

Initially, any fault recorded against 'Eco-safe driving' will be marked in one of the spare boxes on Form DL 25, with the examiner entering a manuscript descriptor.