

MOTOR RISK MANAGEMENT

Driving when the clocks turn back

The clocks go back one hour on 29th October and it is worth recognising that this time of year sees an increase in vehicle accidents. As the nights draw in and the weather gets colder, we need to understand the additional risks and focus our efforts to be responsible drivers.



In 2015 there was an increase in the casualty rate per billion miles from 573 in October to 619 in November. Over the same period pedestrian deaths rose 56%. The aim of this guidance is to raise awareness of the various issues which may arise when the clocks change back such as increased visibility issues caused by the seasonally lower sun, and the risk with children playing outside in the evenings.

Actions to consider

Vehicle maintenance is another key issue at this time of year. Many drivers do not undertake enough checks on the condition of their vehicle. Actions for drivers include

- Checking your vehicle is serviced and well maintained
- Check anti-freeze levels are adequate
- Check tyre tread depths are legal and that tyres are adequately inflated
- Check that all lights are working and that light lenses and windows are clean.

Driving in darker conditions appears to result in more vehicle breakdowns. If your vehicle does break down, find a safe and well-lit place to stop. Leave your hazard warning lights on and find a safe place to stand away from the vehicle to wait for help.

Driving in twilight, the period between sunset and dusk, is difficult because your eyes have to constantly adapt to the reducing light levels. This is when drivers can realise they have an issue with their eyesight as they struggle to see traffic signs and suffer with glare from oncoming vehicle lights. An eyesight check at this time of year is a good idea.

For more Risk Management Guidance read our Guide to Risk Management. qbeeurope.com/documents/index/14489

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QBE Insurance Group, Plantation Place 30 Fenchurch Street London EC3M 3BD
tel +44 (0)20 7105 4000 www.QBEurope.com

8288/DrivingWhenClocksTurnBack/OCT2017

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Other points to remember:

- Check the expected weather conditions before you drive.
- Try not to focus on on-coming vehicle high beams and keep your eyes moving.
- Dim your dashboard lights and refrain from leaving your map reading light on.
- Wipe your windscreen with newspaper to remove greasy residues and ensure it is clean. Make sure your exterior mirrors are clean too.
- Adapt your driving, slow down and leave more space between you and the vehicle in front.
- Make sure you can be seen; Turn your headlights on an hour before sunset and keep them on an hour after sunrise. Watch out for cyclists and other vulnerable road users and take extra care by schools and colleges
- Take more breaks when you're on a longer journey
- Remember that there may be many drivers who passed their test in the summer who may have very limited experience of night driving and who may not have made their commute to work in the dark yet
- Remember, children will be likely to be playing in areas of poor light at this time of the year.
- Be aware that due to more wet roads and leaf fall at this time of year, there will be a need for lower speeds and extended stopping distances.
- Always drive with anticipation, but particularly when driving into the sun and at the brow of hills. Expect to be dazzled, so read the road ahead and slow down in good time.
- Check screen wash level in the washer bottle.