

Targeting consistently dangerous roads will save lives

Deaths and serious injuries are both routine and predictable year after year on some main roads, according to an AA Motoring Trust study. These roads have languished at the bottom of the safety league table since the AA Trust started tracking safety performance in 2001.

The AA Trust report [How safe are Britain's main roads?](#) (PDF 2.3M) carried out as part of the European Road Assessment Programme (EuroRAP) initiative, shows that the safest roads are up to 10 times safer than the most dangerous. Once again, single-carriageway roads dominate the list of consistently higher risk roads. Motorways are five times safer than the average single-carriageway road and twice as safe as dual carriageways.

Fatal and serious injury accident rates are on average five times¹ higher on main roads that run through villages or the outskirts of towns than along the rural stretches of the same route. The likelihood of an accident in these built-up areas can be 15 times greater. Across the entire network of inter-urban roads covered by EuroRAP, there are twice as many (1.2) fatal or serious injury accidents per kilometre of road in built-up areas compared to those on rural roads.

Among the most improved roads, casualties have dropped by three-quarters, thanks to measures that encourage drivers to adapt to the sudden change from open road to busier semi-urban layouts.

People continue to be killed and badly injured because simple, affordable measures that dramatically reduce risk are not being put in place. We would not tolerate this on our railways, in the air, or in the workplace, so why do we tolerate it on our roads? says Bert Morris, director of The AA Motoring Trust

Measures to bring the safety record of the higher-risk roads up to the average would save around 50 deaths and prevent 300 serious injuries a year, saving the economy and society over 300 million, and up to 10 million in health service budgets.

The Chancellor is looking for public investment that will produce high rates of return: the AA Trust has evidence that targeting the minority of underperforming roads will achieve that.

Other findings of the EuroRAP 2006 analysis show that one third of deaths and serious injuries on single and dual carriageways happen at junctions, while on motorways a fifth result from vehicles running off the road.

Examples of casualty reductions in built-up areas along rural routes include:

- the UKs most improved road is the A452 Sutton Coldfield to Brownhills, with a 73 per cent reduction in fatal and serious collisions, thanks to speed limits being lowered in built-up areas and measures introduced to deter often disastrous over-taking
- high visibility signs, safety improvements at entrances to villages, and road markings to emphasise speed limits out serious accidents along the A523 Swinsooe to Macclesfield by 65 per cent.
- bypasses along the A5 Shrewsbury to Chirk, the A44 Worcester to Moreton-in-Marsh, and the A43, M40 to Northampton, have halved accidents along the routes.

These successes compare with some of the UKs most dangerous roads where the number of casualties has sometimes dropped, but not enough to take them off the list of Britains worst performers. The five roads with the consistently highest risk of a fatal or serious injury accident are:

- the A682 from the junction 13 of the M65 to the A65 Long Preston
- the A54 Congleton to Buxton
- the A61 Barnsley to Wakefield
- the A82 Tyndrum to Tarbet
- the A623 Baslow to Chapel-en-le-Frith³.

NOTES TO EDITORS:

1 Average number of accidents per kilometre of built-up sections of road versus accidents per kilometre of rural sections of the road. Across the network of inter-urban roads surveyed by EuroRAP, there are just over 24,464 kilometres of rural road, and 3,190 kilometres of built-up stretches of road.

2 Between 2002 and 2004, of the 27,500 kilometres of main road between major UK towns and cities, there were more than 15,000 fatal and serious injury accidents on the open road, compared to just under 4,000 in towns and villages along the routes.

3 Britains consistently higher-risk roads:(KSI = killed and serious injury incidents)

1) A682 (M65 J13 A65 Long Preston) N West/Yorks &Humberside
KSI collisions: 24 (1999-2001), 23 (2002-2004)
Length: 24km. Accident rate: 223 KSI collisions per billion vehicle kms travelled.

2) A54 (Congleton - Buxton) N West
KSI collisions: 18 (1999-2001), 21 (2002-2004)
Length: 24km. Accident rate: 182 KSI collisions per billion vehicle kms travelled.

3) A61 (Barnsley Wakefield) Y&H
KSI collisions: 17 (1999-2001), 22 (2002-2004)
Length: 10km. Accident rate: 174 KSI collisions per billion vehicle kms travelled.

4) A82 (Tyndrum - Tarbet) Scotland
KSI collisions: 21 (1999-2001), 21 (2002-2004)
Length: 34km. Accident rate: 173 KSI collisions per billion vehicle kms travelled.

5) A623 (Baslow Chapel-en-le-Frith) E Mids
KSI collisions: 23 (1999-2001), 26 (2002-2004)
Length: 22km. Accident rate: 159 KSI collisions per billion vehicle kms travelled.

6) A671 (Burnley A59 Whalley) N West
KSI collisions: 23 (1999-2001), 22 (2002-2004)
Length: 10km. Accident rate: 145 KSI collisions per billion vehicle kms travelled.

7) A683 (M6 J34 Kirkby Lonsdale) N West
KSI collisions: 23 (1999-2001), 18 (2002-2004)
Length: 24km. Accident rate: 144 KSI collisions per billion vehicle kms travelled.

8) A6 (Derby - Buxton) E Mids/N West
KSI collisions: 89 (1999-2001), 76 (2002-2004)
Length: 58km. Accident rate: 139 KSI collisions per billion vehicle kms travelled.

9) A59 (Skipton Harrogate) Y&H
KSI collisions: 42 (1999-2001), 36 (2002-2004)
Length: 30km. Accident rate: 138 KSI collisions per billion vehicle kms travelled.

10) A84 (M9 J10 Lochearnhead) Scotland
KSI collisions: 25 (1999-2001), 30 (2002-2004)
Length: 44km. Accident rate: 138 KSI collisions per billion vehicle kms travelled.