

Press release: High-Tech headgear helps promote safer driving

The Government company, responsible for the country's motorways and major A roads, has developed a free app to raise drivers' awareness of their blind spots.

What Highways England's Virtual Reality App looks like

The app can be accessed on a smart phone attached to a simple pair of cardboard goggles so drivers can use it before they get behind the wheel.

John Walford Commercial Vehicle Incident Prevention Team Leader said:

We have set ourselves the long term vision that no-one should be harmed while travelling or working on our roads, and within that it is doing all we can to help reduce collisions involving lorries because they tend to have a greater impact when they do occur.

They most commonly occur when trucks change lanes or attempt to overtake and using this technology allows us to provide a realistic environment for commercial vehicle drivers so that they can experience the impact of not using their mirrors to check blind spots. It's just one of the steps we're taking to help improve safety for this valuable group of drivers and ultimately everyone who uses our network.

The app includes 5 road safety scenarios for both left and right hand drive vehicles and has been developed to stress the importance of adjusting mirrors to cater for driving in a different way when in the UK. The blind spot app has 5 scenarios:

- mirror adjustment
- identifying vehicles in blind spots
- joining a motorway from a slip road
- overtaking
- tailgating

It is on show at this week's Commercial Vehicle Show taking place at the NEC in Birmingham, with Highways England giving the free headsets to visitors.

Although developed for commercial vehicle drivers, the app could also benefit private motorists by giving them a sense of what commercial vehicle drivers experience every day. For example, helping them to understand the location of commercial vehicle blind spots and hence reduce the potential for unnecessary accidents.

The virtual reality app is just an example of the safety initiatives that

Highways England has developed as part of its commercial vehicle incident prevention programme. The programme includes initiatives to improve the design and maintenance of commercial vehicles and initiatives to assist operators and drivers.

Examples include:

- a joint initiative with police using HGV cabs to target dangerously driven vehicles (one of the cabs with police representatives will be at the Show);
- the installation of sophisticated tyre/vehicle measurement (tyre pressure, tyre tread depth, vehicle weight, axles heat) technology at key locations;
- initiatives with the Health & Safety Executive and the police to improve load security; and interventions to reduce diesel spillages which damage the carriageway and cause long delays.
- development of truck stop apps in Polish and Romanian (they can also be seen at the Commercial Vehicle Show).

General enquiries

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

Media enquiries

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.