



Shakespeare Business Centre
245a Coldharbour Lane
London SW9 8RR

info@roadpeace.org
www.roadpeace.org
Tel: 020 7733 1603

Expert Panel on Drug Driving announced

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RoadPeace welcomes the announcement today that the government is to establish an expert panel on impairment levels due to drug driving. Unlike other recently announced proposals such as increasing motorway speed limits and lorry lengths or relaxing eyesight and vehicle testing requirements, this government initiative should help to reduce road danger, and save lives.

However, impaired driving as a result of drug use is not just restricted to illegal drugs. Whilst this announcement restricts the panel to reviewing the technical aspects of illegal drugs, RoadPeace calls for its remit to be extended to also consider prescribed drugs.

But more could be done, and done immediately. In 1996, ACPO (Association of Chief Police Officers, the body responsible for setting good practice guidelines for police forces), adopted a policy of breathalysing every driver in a fatal crash. Despite the prevalence of drug use (both illegal and prescribed) and its well documented impact on judgement and motor control, there is no such policy on drug testing, not even for night-time fatal crashes or fatal crashes involving young drivers.

This has been a key issue for our bereaved members for, in contrast to the drivers in fatal crashes, all those killed in crashes, including children, are tested for drugs. Thus the priority has been on testing victims, many of whom will be pedestrians and passengers, rather than holding drivers accountable for their actions. This is a key missed opportunity and once again, we call for all drivers in fatal crashes to be drug tested. The time and cost of a blood test can be justified, unlike the taking of a life by impaired driving.

References:

Government to establish expert panel on drug driving: <http://www.dft.gov.uk/news/stories/dft-news-20120104>

For further information contact:

RoadPeace	020 7733 1603	during office hours
Amy Aeron-Thomas, Executive Director:	07905 847917	outside office hours

Notes for journalists:

RoadPeace

RoadPeace is an independent national charity, providing practical information, emotional support and advocacy to those affected by road crashes; as well as campaigning for justice for road crash victims and for road danger reduction policies.

RoadPeace was a winner of the Guardian Charity Award in 2008:

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/video/2008/dec/04/guardian-charity-awards-roadpeace>

Road Danger Reduction

RoadPeace was founded in 1992 on the principle of road danger reduction (RDR) which places a greater duty of care on those that pose the greater threat, and argues for danger to be controlled at source through reducing the speed, volume and dominance of motorised traffic. RDR differs from traditional road safety by adopting a wider approach that considers not only the quantity of death and injury by crashes but also the other negative consequences of inappropriate and excessive motor vehicle use such as fear and intimidation, environmental impact and public health issues.

Crash not Accident

RoadPeace is calling for an end to a language of neglect and denial and for policy makers and the media to stop using the word 'accident' when referring to road crashes, and to adopt an appropriate, constructive and accurate terminology such as crash or collision:

http://www.roadpeace.org/resources/Crash_not_Accident_May_11_2011.pdf

ENDS