

Uninsured drivers face new crackdown

Road Safety Minister Mike Penning has announced new powers to tackle uninsured drivers, which will come into force in the Spring. It will become an offence to keep an uninsured vehicle, rather than just to drive uninsured. Under the new system the DVLA will work with the Motor Insurers' Bureau to identify uninsured vehicles. Motorists will receive a letter telling them that their vehicle appears to be uninsured and warning them that they will be fined unless they take action; if the keeper fails to insure the vehicle they will be given a £100 fine, and if the vehicle remains uninsured, regardless of whether the fine is paid, it could then be seized and destroyed. Vehicles with a valid Statutory Off Road Notice (SORN) will not be required to be insured.

Penning said: "More than 400 uninsured vehicles are already being seized by the police every day but it is simply not possible to catch every uninsured driver in this way. That is why we are bringing in these new powers which will help us to take targeted action while freeing up police time to deal with the hard core of offenders:'

Head injuries can increase mortality risk for up to 13 years

The Journal of Neurology Neurosurgery and Psychiatry reports on research which suggests a head injury can affect mortality up to 13 years after the incident. The study tracked over 2,000 people, 757 of whom had sustained a head injury that required admission to hospital. The other participants were healthy people and people who had been admitted to hospital for other reasons.

40 per cent (305) of those who had sustained a head injury died within 13 years of the event, which was higher than the rate of those admitted with other injuries (28 per cent) and healthy people (19 per cent).

The first year after injury had the highest risk of death, but this continued for at least another 12 years. The research found that deaths among people aged between 15-54 were more than six times higher. There are no clear explanations for the higher death rates among the young and middle aged, and the researchers state that there is a need to understand how head injury influences mortality, particularly in younger adults and after mild head injury.

The head-injured were almost three times as likely to die of circulatory, respiratory, digestive, psychiatric and external causes as the healthy peers. The annual rate of death from all causes among the head-injured was almost 31 per 1,000 people compared with just under 14 per 1,000 from healthy people. The researchers suggest that lifestyle factors before the injury, such as excessive alcohol intake, living alone or mental health problems have an affect on survival.

It is clear that preventing the injuries in the first place - through safer systems of work and the use of the correct protective equipment and guidelines - would be a particularly effective way of tackling the problem.