

# Corporate Manslaughter

## Covering your back... *and other parts*

*Tony Phipps, MD of OWL Vehicle Electronic Systems shows how you can stay within the law and make a real improvement in your vehicle safety record.*

Once upon a time a fleet manager for a national utility said to us "We have hundreds of vehicles and we self-insure. It's cheaper for us to run a few people over than to fit your safety devices"

I wonder if he could keep his job now that his boss might go to jail as well.

It's over 30 years since the Health and Safety at Work Act came into force yet attitudes to vehicle safety are still surprisingly poor in many organisations.

In spite of the H&S policy public relations statements in corporate annual reports, it's often the Finance Director who determines how much, or how little is spent on safety.

Now the Finance Director may go to jail as well.

But it can be financially beneficial to have a robust safety policy that helps to keep employees at work, vehicles on the road and customers alive to accept your deliveries.

And with Corporate Manslaughter legislation, personnel at all levels will want to know that they are safe with their backs well and truly covered.

Of course there is no single answer to safe vehicle operation but management need to be able to show that they have taken reasonable precautions to prevent accidents.

In addition to driver training and vehicle maintenance there are many products available to help prevent accidents. It is in the interest of relevant managers to consider those products and

where appropriate recommend their fitment.

Loading and unloading, reversing, turning left and even leaving the driver's seat are common activities that can easily lead to accidents.

Communication with drivers and pedestrians and increasingly with cyclists is essential whenever a potentially hazardous activity or manoeuvre is about to take place.

Even when a rear-view camera or reversing sensor is fitted this won't stop a pedestrian stepping out behind a reversing vehicle.

But a simple warning message "*Attention...this vehicle is reversing*" will immediately deter such action.

Similarly an in-cab message like "*Driver...apply the handbrake*" can prevent the all-too-common vehicle runaway.

And accidents with slow-moving vehicles both on the road and in pedestrianised areas can be avoided with a warning such as "*Caution...sweeper approaching*"

The human voice is much more effective than any other sound.

It can warn of the nature of a danger and instruct on a course of action "*Deck moving...stand clear*"

It is also directional and immediately identifies the source of the danger.

It can also be male or female and multi-lingual e.g. English/Welsh.

No matter how specialised the vehicle or its operation a real human voice message can be tailored precisely to deliver the required instruction or warning.



Similarly, potentially hazardous locations in depots and delivery bays can easily be equipped with warning sounders to draw attention to anything from lift trucks operating to roller shutter doors closing and conveyor belts about to start.

With fear of theft and violent confrontation on passenger transport vehicles or high-value cargo and cash carriers, the system extends to attack alarms with equal effect.

OWL Vehicle Electronic Systems provide talking safety and security solutions to Local Authorities and vehicle builders as well as national commercial fleets.

Which shows there is more than one way to cover your back...and other parts. It's just that some ways are more effective than others.



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