

Cutting the vehicle safety budget is false economy

Fleet operators continue to suffer increases in running costs and are forced to look for savings elsewhere.

However, even when times are hard it just doesn't make sense to take short-cuts with safety. Cutting the safety budget is like cutting your throat. It's quick and effective, but the consequences are likely to be just as fatal. Safety legislation now reaches every level of management and the potential costs far exceed any short-term savings. Safety is the one thing that every Managing Director should ensure is recession-proof.

From a purely financial point of view the last thing any company wants is to have its vehicles off the road due to an accident or to suffer the cost of personal injury claims or the adverse publicity resulting from a major incident.

But it's not all doom and gloom. The sensible solution is to spend the budget wisely and still be able to demonstrate that you and your company have taken adequate safety precautions. One of the most cost-effective actions you can take is to fit your vehicles with talking safety sounders from O.W.L. Vehicle Electronic Systems.

Their low-cost real human voice warning messages are proven to be far more effective than any other warning system.

Managing Director Tony Phipps explains:

"Whatever the safety application on your vehicle you can deliver a warning message that instantly identifies the potential danger and gets an immediate reaction.

"Cameras, sensors and other devices can help when manoeuvring but the driver doesn't stand a chance of avoiding an accident when pedestrians simply step out in front of or behind a moving vehicle.

"The fact that vehicles may be moving slowly either on the road or in depots means that pedestrians are often oblivious to the danger. If there are several vehicles in the area the problem is even greater."

O.W.L. have seen a steady increase in the range of applications called for by customers and with the advent of near-silent electric vehicles demand for effective safety solutions is sure to rise even further.

Of course reversing beepers have been used for many years, but Phipps tells why they are not really up to the job.

"Once upon a time beepers were fitted to motorcycles to remind the rider that his direction indicators were operating. But when they were added to pedestrian crossings as a safe-to-cross signal, people stepped out in front of bikes at road junctions and were mown down. The solution was to take the beepers off the motorcycles and promptly put them onto trucks as reversing alarms - with similar consequences.

"Fact is beepers are often ignored. It is difficult to identify where the sound is coming from and the tones carry for considerable distances in all directions.

"The human voice is completely directional, you automatically turn towards its source. Talking sounders deliver the message precisely where it is needed, and that is in the danger zone"

O.W.L. produced the first talking reversing alarms back in the 1980s and it is a tribute to the technology that even then they outlived the vehicles they were fitted to. From humble beginnings the product range has grown to cover warning systems for almost any safety or security application you can imagine on vehicles and in premises. Compared with the

overall cost of buying and operating a vehicle the price of a talking sounder is minute, but the potential savings can be enormous.

Take for example the widespread problem of runaway vehicles. Near-misses are never heard of but when an incident occurs loss of life or injury is par for the course and damage is extensive. Can you afford just one incident? Most runaways happen not because of brake failure but because the handbrake has been left off.

A talking warning sounder in the cab can easily prevent the problem by instructing the driver to 'apply the handbrake' if he opens his door whilst the handbrake is off. An extra weatherproof speaker outside even ensures that the driver can still hear the message if he leaves the cab and closes the door behind him. It continues to sound until the handbrake has been applied.

Then we all know the dangers of cycle lanes in busy town centres. A large commercial vehicle stops at a road junction waiting to turn left. Just as the driver prepares to move off a cyclist or motorcyclist undertakes on the nearside and goes straight across at the junction. Legislation now requires the fitting of blind spot mirrors, but mirrors can never stop the cyclist undertaking.

A vehicle can now have sounders mounted on the nearside of the vehicle with a message 'warning... vehicle turning left'.

Activities involving equipment and vehicles are carried out many times each day with the result that drivers and equipment operators are often on auto-pilot. This means that sometimes their full attention is not given to the task in hand.

When this requires manoeuvres or movement of cranes, loaders or other equipment near to other workers or members of the public, there is always the potential for accidents to happen.

Every day vehicles are driven away with stabiliser jacks down, lorry loaders raised, tailgates open and other equipment not securely stowed.

In most cases a suitably worded warning message can prevent the incident. And with a little thought on the method of installing and triggering the systems there will never be any noise nuisance, because if there is a no danger situation, the message will not sound. So when it does sound for real it generates an immediate response.

Talking sounders can say whatever you want them to. O.W.L. have provided systems for applications in local languages from South America to China. As a customer you can choose a standard message or have a bespoke message personalised to the vehicle operator or a specific application. O.W.L. supply to vehicle manufacturers, body builders, distributors, local authorities, utilities, blue-chip fleet operators and ownerdrivers.



For more information:
www.safervehicles.co.uk