

PR233: Hidden report reveals serious speed camera dangers

News: for immediate release

TRL report number 595, commissioned by the Highways Agency and delivered in early 2004, looked at motorway road works crashes and evaluated the effects of various safety treatments. Safe Speed obtained a full copy and found the following information:

- * Where fixed speed cameras were installed at road works the risk of personal injury crashes was increased by 55%.
- * Where fixed speed cameras were installed on open motorways the risk of injury crashes was increased by 31%.
- * Average speed cameras also increased the risk of crashes by 4.5% at roadworks and 6.7% elsewhere.
- * Conventional Police patrols reduced the risk of crashes by 27% at road works and 10% elsewhere.
- * Speed cameras were associated with an increase in crash severity with fatal and serious crashes being 32% more likely where speed cameras were operated.
- * Motorway road works are no more dangerous than open motorways.

In the executive summary, the seriously damaging information presented in the report isn't calculated out - except as an aggregate with Police patrols included. The police patrols showed a positive benefit while the speed cameras showed a negative effect. These two were allowed to cancel out to show zero as a net benefit.

Paul Smith, founder of the Safe Speed road safety campaign (www.safespeed.org.uk) said:

"It is outrageous that this sort of information has been hidden from the public. We all need the best information to help us to drive as safely as possible. Whenever we are driving we have to manage risk - and the more we understand the real risks the better we manage them."

"We have all seen strange driver behaviour where fixed speed cameras operate. This report highlights the dangers. We're not surprised to see this information - we have known for years that speed cameras were the wrong road safety strategy, and it's a huge relief to see the truth coming out so clearly."

"It has often been argued that digital speed cameras (which measure average speed between two points) lack the 'obvious' problems of single location speed cameras - for example you cannot defeat the camera by slowing briefly - but

this information shows that digital speed cameras also make the roads more dangerous."

"After thousands of hours of research it became obvious to me that speed cameras were having a negative effect on road safety. The evidence used to support the speed camera programme has been weak and inadequate - often based on nothing more than false assumptions. Now the truth is emerging, I'm hoping for an immediate return to former road safety policies - policies that delivered the safest roads in the world. Road safety isn't founded in 'simple' things like vehicle speeds - instead it is founded in complex and subtle human behaviours - we have to help drivers to make fewer mistakes, not force them to pay too much attention to one minor safety factor."

"Many motorists won't be surprised by the news - they have always harboured deep suspicions about the speed camera programme - and will be relieved to learn that they were right all along."

"We must get these dangerous cameras off our motorways RIGHT NOW!"

"The Highways Agency have reported an increase in road worker deaths in the first half of 2005. They should read their own research and get rid of the dangerous distracting speed cameras."

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Notes for editors:

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Previous Safe Speed PRs, issued before the full report was obtained:

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/SafeSpeedPR/message/76>

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/SafeSpeedPR/message/77>

Safe Speed web page with copy of table 3.18 and calculations shown:

<http://www.safespeed.org.uk/tr1595.html>

Editors and journalists may also quote freely from that page until 30th September 2005 - after that date contact the office for permission.

We would love to offer a link to the full report, but we're not allowed to.

About Safe Speed

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The Safe Speed road safety campaign is primarily the work of engineer-turned road safety analyst Paul Smith.

Since setting up Safe Speed in 2001, Paul Smith, 50, an advanced motorist and

road safety enthusiast, and a professional engineer of 25 years UK experience, has carried out over 10,000 hours working on the campaign with well over 5,000 of those hours researching the overall effects of speed camera policy on UK road safety. In addition to those 10,000 hours, Paul has funded to campaign to the tune of £10,000.

We believe that this is more work in more detail than anything carried out by any other organisation. Paul's surprising conclusion is that overall speed cameras make our roads more dangerous. Paul has identified and reported a number of major flaws and false assumptions in the claims made for speed cameras, and the whole "speed kills" system of road safety.

The inescapable conclusion is that we should urgently return to the excellent road safety policies that gave us in the UK the safest roads in the World in the first place. Far from saving lives, speed cameras are a dangerous distraction.

Safe Speed does not campaign against speed limits or appropriate enforcement of motoring laws, but argues vigorously that automated speed enforcement is neither safe nor appropriate.

Safe Speed is very slimly funded by voluntary contributions to the web site. We are urgently seeking improved funding.

The Safe Speed web site contains more than 350,000 words of road safety analysis and information. We are seeking publishers for 'the book of the web site'.

It has turned out to be quite an amazing story and there are opportunities for journalists and broadcasters to explore how all this came about, what it means, and where road safety has gone so badly wrong.

Contact Safe Speed:

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note: the mobile does not work well at our office. Always try land line first.

Location: North Scotland

We are always available for further comment on your road safety story.

To be added to our PR distribution list send an email to

psmith@... or visit our press pages at:
<http://www.safespeed.org.uk/prindex.html>

Recent press releases (since November 2004) are automatically and immediately
uploaded to:
<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/SafeSpeedPR>

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NEW! ISDN Audio: 01862 832674
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