

Driver training = Safer roads



The Sutton Road Training Centre prioritises knowledge and skills over simply achieving a certificate of minimum standard to comply.

BY ANDY HUGHES, HEAVY VEHICLE DRIVING INSTRUCTOR

BETTER driver training makes better drivers which in turn makes for safer roads and helps reduce injury and the associated road toll.

Pretty obvious isn't it? However the idea of incorporating heavy vehicle defensive driver training into a healthy and progressive licencing system for novice truck drivers is not a new one, it's just difficult.

Here at Sutton Road Training Centre we prefer to prioritise knowledge and skills over simply achieving a certificate of minimum standard to comply.

Truck combinations are getting larger, requiring even more specific skills.

In addition, we have a critical driver shortage.

Truck drivers are mostly older folks and they're not getting any younger.

There is downward pressure on wages and upward

pressures on the cost of living so drivers are moving into other industries and taking their years of experience with them.

And unlike VHS tapes, fax machines or landline phones, demand for road freight is only going to grow into the future, putting even more pressure on an already stretched workforce.

The result of all that is an increase in pressure to restructure the licencing system and streamline the process of induction into the industry.

Call me Captain Obvious if you wish, but the road is a very risky place to work.

If you make a mistake, the risk of injury, or worse, to you and other road users, is instant, and substantial.

A high-tech vehicle on a smooth road at a sensible speed is about as safe as you can make it.

However road safety is not only about technology, rest stops, public awareness or fatigue policy and regulations.

Road safety is not just about machinery, engineering

or infrastructure.

The human factor is a big part of the business of road safety.

Attitude, competence and experience are relevant and subjective.

But as a mechanic friend once told me, "The most important piece of equipment is the nut behind the wheel." Hopefully a well-educated nut.

Any money spent on driver training helps save lives.

It makes financial sense and road safety sense to provide novice truckies the skills to survive in a fast-moving and unpredictable environment.

It is great policy and wise investment.

Certain government representatives and peak trucking groups have been advocating for some time for licencing reform, enhanced driver training and creating clear career pathways for young drivers entering the industry.

However, everyone is busy recovering after an extended period of uncertainty and up-



The training centre is pushing for greater road safety through better education and training.

heaval thanks to Covid.

Councils are scrambling to fix roads after long periods of wet weather and companies are chasing an ever-moving bottom line.

Governments, regulators and educators are trying to make sense of it all.

But let's not streamline an already streamlined licencing system to help fill a skills gap.

Here at Sutton Road Training Centre we like to push our road safety wheelbarrow through better education and training.

We want to help shape a comprehensive and constructive driver training and licencing system to provide the transport sector with new operators who are as "job-ready" as possible.

If you are reading this and you appreciate the argument, if you want to get off that dangerous highway and get more work/life balance. If you want to apply those years of high-way experience and explore an exciting new career as an educator, give us a call. Just ask for Captain Obvious.



Centre training manager Clinton Ernst (foreground) believes that driver training is a road safety issue.