

AA hits at police speed trap tactics

The President of the Hongkong Automobile Association, Mr Gerald Strickland, has hit out at the police radar speed traps, saying they are perhaps the worst example of "bad laws badly administered."

In the latest edition of the HKAA Gazette, Mr Strickland said most drivers treated the traps with contempt, and they frequently created more hazards than they prevent.

"If we assume that the main objective of the police and transport authorities is the education of motorists and the prevention of dangerous driving, we can only conclude that some people in authority are showing a sad lack of intelligence," Mr Strickland said.

"How many members are aware that a driver who is convicted of a charge of exceeding 40 miles per hour on Waterfront Road is guilty of a criminal offence?" he asked.

"And even more seriously, that it is mandatory for him to be disqualified from driving for at least six months if he is unlucky enough to be caught three times - even if there is no element of dangerous driving involved?"

Mr Strickland said the penalty of disqualification was grossly disproportionate, in most cases, to the seriousness of the offence.

He advised AA members to contact the association immediately upon notification of disqualification before making any report of any kind to the authorities.

"In such cases, we believe we can be of help in preventing the imposition of an unfair and unintelligent penalty," he said.

Mr Strickland also criticised the times at which the traps are set up on the waterfront.

"The radar appears to be usable only when driving conditions are good - when the road is clear, traffic is light and when it is bright daylight. In other words, when the speed limit could well be higher," he said.

"Conversely, the radar does not operate in driving conditions when even speeds well below the limit may be dangerous."

In another article, the

HKAA said that if the fitting and wearing of seat belts in motor vehicles is to become compulsory, the Government should launch an education programme for motorists.

"This is necessary if they wish to introduce seat belt legislation and to gain acceptance from motorists," the article added.

"Besides gaining this acceptance, it would help to guide motorists in the proper use of seat belts so as to get the most benefit."

Referring to an experiment carried out by a British motorists magazine in 1973, the article pointed out that if compulsory wearing of seat belts was legislated for, 19 out of every 20 motorists would wear them in a potentially dangerous way.

"Other results were that some seat belts were not fitted properly," it said.

"A badly adjusted seat belt may save lives, but often at the cost of abdominal injuries," the article added.

Because of this, the article suggested that people in Britain were of the opinion that there were serious shortcomings in the way they were exhorted by Government publicity to "clunk-click" every trip. (Clunk-click is a well-known slogan in Britain for the use of seat belts.)

It suggested that to protect motorists who do take the trouble to buckle-up, action was required on the following points before enforcement:

- Seat belts in many current models which are up to acceptable standards should be brought to the attention of motorists.

- Car handbooks should be required by law to spell out exactly how seat belts should be worn.

- There should be independent checks to ensure that instructions provided with seat belts are sufficiently comprehensive. There should also be instructions on the proper fitting of seat belts.

Another point the article noted was that not every vehicle manual contained instructions where to place the seat belt.

"When wearing the lap section, one should wear it over the hard pelvic bones and not over the soft parts of the abdomen," it added.