

A High Level Group on Road Safety was set up in 1990 to promote coordination between the different national agencies involved in road safety. The group is chaired by the Department of the Environment and Local Government and has representation from the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, the Department of Health and Children, An Garda Síochána, the National Roads Authority, the National Safety Council, the Medical Bureau of Road Safety and the Irish Insurance Federation.

The Government has also assigned to the High Level Group the task of monitoring the implementation of the Government Strategy for Road Safety 1998 - 2002¹ and of recommending adjustments to it. The Group is mandated to provide independent monitoring of the progress of the Strategy and to publish its assessments.

The present membership of the High Level Group on Road Safety is:

Niall Callan (Chair)	Department of the Environment and Local Government
Riona Ní Fhlangaile	Department of the Environment and Local Government
Chris Fitzgerald	Department of Health and Children
Michelle Shannon	Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform
Betty Walsh	Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform
Chief Superintendent Al McHugh	An Garda Síochána
Superintendent Vincent Maguire	An Garda Síochána
Mike Kemp	Irish Insurance Federation
Dr. Denis Cusack	Medical Bureau of Road Safety
Pauline Leavy	Medical Bureau of Road Safety
Harry Cullen	National Roads Authority
Finbarr Crowley	National Roads Authority
Cartan Finegan	National Safety Council
Pat Costello	National Safety Council
James McDermott (Secretary)	Department of the Environment and Local Government

¹ "The Road to Safety" (July 1998) is published by the Department of the Environment and Local Government and is available (free of charge) from Road Safety and Traffic Section, Department of the Environment and Local Government, O'Connell Bridge House, Dublin 2 or at the website : www.enviro.nie

CONTENTS

1. Overview
2. Progress towards Strategy targets.
 - Primary target - reduction in fatalities/serious injuries
 - Supporting targets
 - Speeding
 - Alcohol
 - Seat belt wearing
 - Engineering measures
3. Progress on implementation of policies and measures
 - Enforcement
 - Education and Information
 - Engineering
 - Legislation/regulations
 - Organisation/finance
 - Research
4. Recommendations towards 2000.

Appendix

Timetable for key Strategy actions 1999-2002

I. OVERVIEW

The Government Strategy for Road Safety has been designed for implementation over the 5 year period 1998 to 2002. Its formal targets are expressed in terms of outcomes for 2002; interim targets have however been set indicatively for achievement by end 2000.

It is inherently difficult to assess progress with the Strategy at this early stage of its term. The Strategy itself indicated that a 5 year planning period was being adopted

" so as to allow trends to be identified and monitored with reasonable accuracy and because a number of key measures of the Strategy will take some time to mobilise fully ". (pp 7&8)

On the other hand the adoption of quantified road safety targets for Ireland was an important initiative of the "Road to Safety", and one intended to focus public and political interest on attaining the Strategy's goals.

Against this background, the High Level Group on Road Safety proposes to make annual progress reports in relation to the Government's Strategy for Road Safety. The value and accuracy of these reports should increase throughout the implementation period for the Strategy as trends become more discernible and specific policies and measures are fully mobilised. The present report responds only to the Group's mandate to monitor the progress of the Strategy. While the Group is also mandated to recommend adjustments to the Strategy, it does not consider it feasible or appropriate to address this in the present first report. Later reports will assess the need for adjustments to the Strategy.

There is no such thing as an acceptable level of road accidents: the immediate task set by the Government Strategy is however to ensure that fatal and serious injury accidents are each reduced by at least 20% by 2002. In this light, the Group considers that in the first year since the Strategy was announced (in July 1998) good progress has been made with implementation. Provisional information for 1998 indicates

- a downward movement towards the **primary target** of the Strategy - the number of deaths was

down by 3% and the number of serious injuries by a significant 12%,

- movement towards the **supporting targets**
 - car and truck speeds are down slightly,
 - there were less fatal accidents in the nighttime hours (commonly drink related),
 - front seat belt wearing (subject to confirmation by a full national survey) may be moving significantly towards the Strategy target of 85% and
 - accident reduction measures have been implemented at 93 national road locations.

Key new policies and actions are also being implemented

- the use of automatic speed detection systems has been extended, and fixed speed cameras have been installed,
- evidential breath testing for drink driving will commence in October, 1999,
- on-the-spot fines have been extended to non-wearing of seat belts and a range of other road safety related offences, and
- preparation of legislation to introduce a penalty points system is being advanced.

For the future, the Group recommends that action should continue to be concentrated on the main priorities identified in the Government Strategy viz. **speeding, alcohol and seat belt wearing**. Further study is also recommended on the involvement of young persons in road accidents. The Group considers finally that implementing agencies for the Strategy should actively seek ways of preventing a trend towards deteriorating road performance which has become pronounced during the second half (July - December) of the year.



2. PROGRESS TOWARDS STRATEGY TARGETS

PRIMARY TARGET

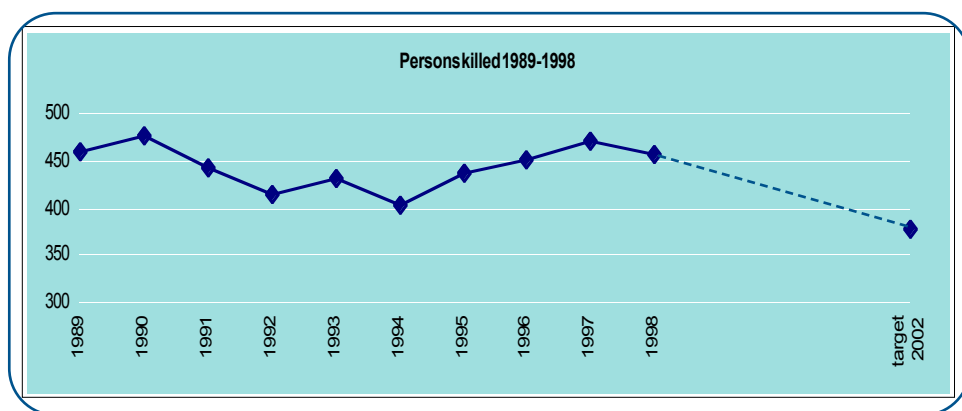
The primary target of the Government Strategy for Road Safety 1998-2002 is expressed in terms of an absolute reduction in road accident fatalities and serious injuries. The Strategy aims to reduce Irish road fatalities by 2002 by a minimum of 20% on their 1997 level. This would save 172 lives in 2002 compared to a continuation of earlier (pre Strategy) road safety policies and measures only. A similar target was set for serious injuries.

1998 performance

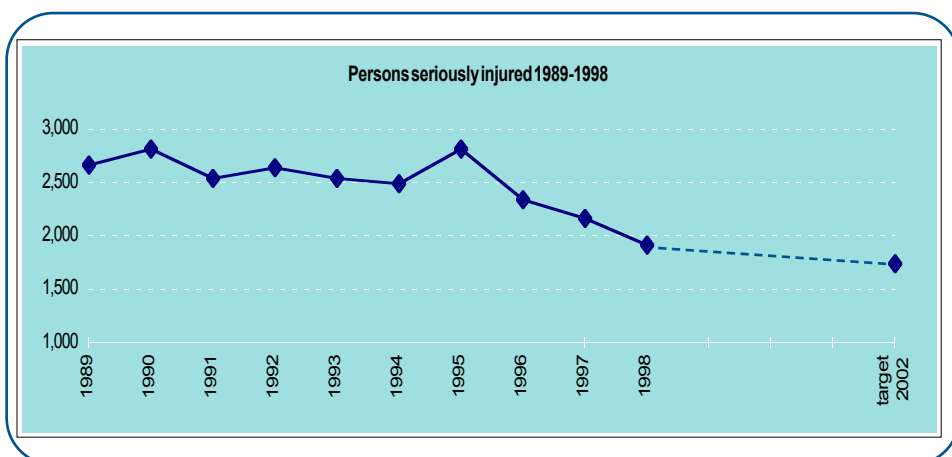
Provisional data for 1998 indicate a downward movement towards the primary target of the Strategy:

- 3% less people died on our roads in 1998 than in 1997 [1997- 472; 1998 - 458].
- 12% less people were seriously injured on our roads in 1998 than in 1997 [1997 - 2,182; 1998 - 1,916].

The reduction in serious injuries is particularly significant and represents (at -12%) major progress towards the 5 year Strategy target of a minimum 20% reduction. Serious injury numbers in 1998 were the lowest for this decade.



deaths
down 3%



serious
injuries
down 12%



SUPPORTING TARGETS

The Strategy sets supporting targets for the key action areas of speeding, alcohol and seat belt wearing and also for engineering measures to reduce accidents at high accident locations.

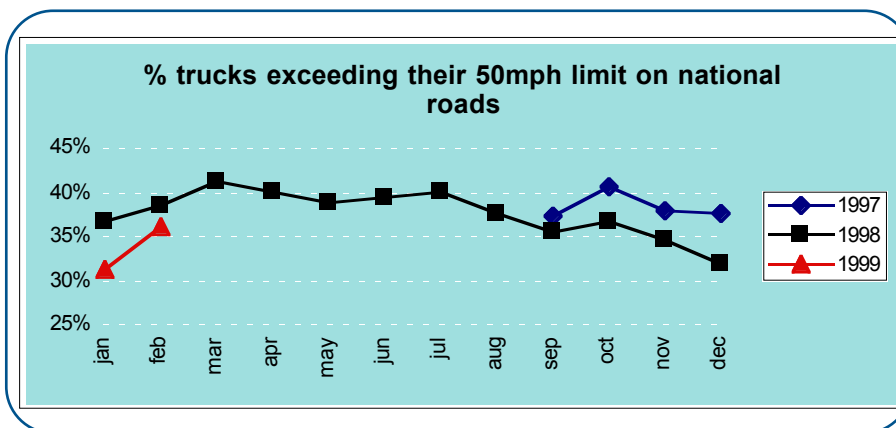
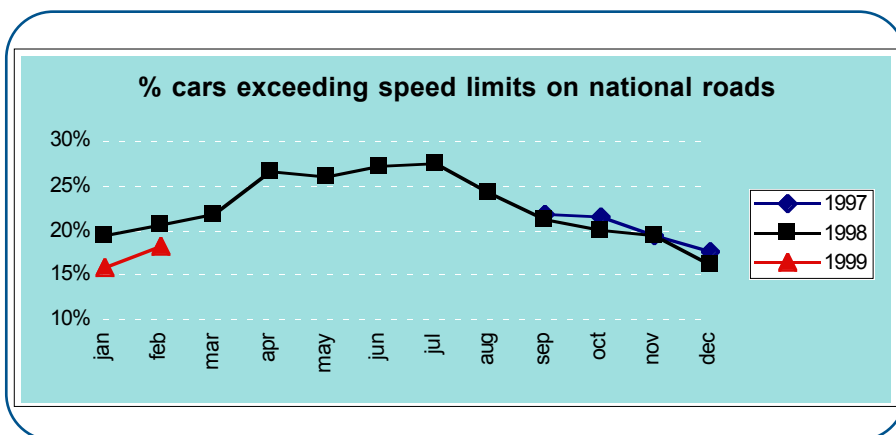
Speeding

target → **reduce the incidence of excess speeding by 50% from present levels**

Summary data from NRA speed counters for the 18 month period September 1997 to February 1999 offer some indications that speed limit observance is improving on Irish roads. However there is still considerable scope for improvement, and a continuation of present marginal improvements in speed limit observance would not meet the 50% reduction target by 2002 fixed by the Strategy:

- observance of speed limits by cars for the last four months of 1998 shows a 1% improvement compared to 1997,
- observance of their 50mph limit by trucks for the same period shows a 4% improvement, and
- on average some 37% of trucks exceeded their legal limit of 50mph and some 22% of cars exceeded the road speed limit (generally 60mph) in the 18 month period illustrated.

The results of the NRA national speed survey now being undertaken will provide an improved benchmark for monitoring reductions in speeds over the Strategy period.



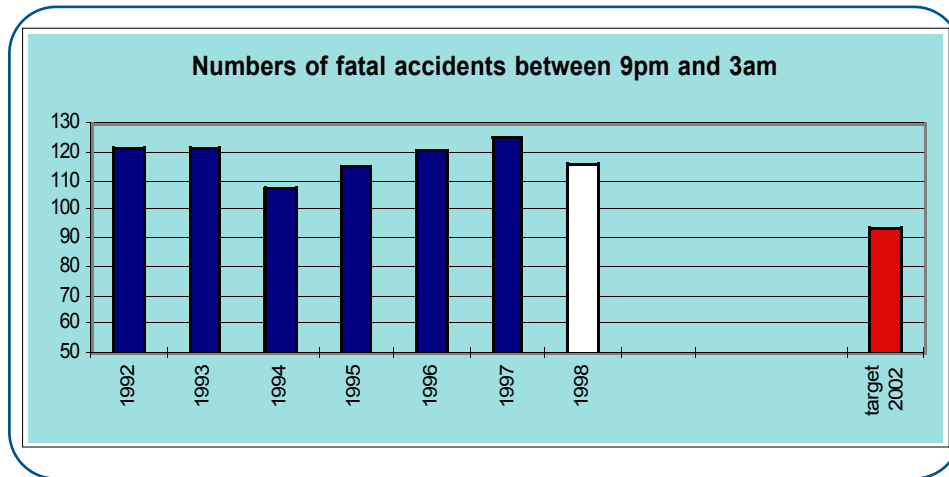
car and truck speed limits better observed



Alcohol

target → to reduce by 25% the number of fatal road accidents (commonly drink related) occurring between the hours of 9pm and 3am

Provisional information for 1998 shows a 7% reduction in the number of fatal accidents occurring between the hours of 9pm and 3am.



reduction in nighttime fatal accidents

Seat Belt Wearing

target → increase the wearing of front and rear seat belts to at least 85%

The results of a full national seat belt survey currently being undertaken by NRA will provide a benchmark for monitoring seat belt wearing over the remaining period of the Strategy.

The results of recent attitudinal surveys suggest that front seat belt wearing may be moving significantly towards the Strategy target of 85%. Some 82% of adult² respondents in The National Health and Lifestyle Surveys³ reported always or nearly always using seatbelts when travelling in the front seat of a car. In surveys⁴ carried out for the National Safety Council in April/May 1999 85% of respondents reported always wearing a seat belt in the front of a car. These results will however be subject to the more authoritative findings of the NRA survey.

Engineering Measures

target → to implement specific accident reduction measures at more than 400 additional national road locations

The National Roads Authority (NRA) completed specific accident reduction measures at 93 locations in 1998 and are on target to complete a further 104 in 1999.

works completed at 93 accident blackspots

² Survey of Lifestyle, Attitudes and Nutrition, (SLAN) - adults aged 18+ years

³ Published by the Department of Health and Children in February 1999

⁴ Conducted by Irish Marketing Surveys at 70 sampling points on 1,398 persons aged over 15 years.

3. PROGRESS ON IMPLEMENTATION OF POLICIES AND MEASURES

The Government Strategy for Road Safety 1998-2002 proposes a range of policies and measures to deliver on its targets. The Appendix to the Strategy set out in chart form a provisional timetable for key actions so as to assist the monitoring of the Strategy. This report describes progress on key actions scheduled for 1998 and 1999. An updated timetable is also appended to this report.

ENFORCEMENT

- Operation Lifesaver continues to provide a strong and intensified focus for road safety enforcement activity by the Garda Síochána. Overall in 1998 the number of detections and sanctions for road safety offences (excluding speed detections referred to below) increased by 9.5% compared to 1997.
- In 1998 131,931 on the spot fines notices for speeding were issued compared to 71,337 in 1997 - an 84% increase. Indications for 1999 show a continuation of this upward trend, with over 62,000 notices issued during the first four months of the year. Payment rates of over 80% indicate good public support for this measure which has permitted the sanctioning of a much greater number of speeding violations without burdening the courts system.
- Improved enforcement in relation to drink driving is demonstrated by the 19% increase in 1998 over 1997 in the number of blood and urine samples, submitted for analysis by the Gardaí, certified by the Medical Bureau of Road Safety. This increase has continued into 1999 with an 8% increase in the first quarter over the same period in 1998.
- The Minister of State at the Department of the Environment and Local Government made regulations in January 1999 to extend the system of on-the-spot fines to a wider range of road traffic offences including stop and yield sign infringements, traffic light infringements, box junction violations, defective tyres, non-wearing of seat belts and breaches of centre roadway and merging/diverging road markings. Gardaí will apply these regulations with effect from July 1999. This should further enhance road safety enforcement particularly in the key area of seat belt wearing.
- 3 additional mobile speed detection units were commissioned in December 1998 bringing the total fleet to 5 vehicles. A further unit will be mobilised by end 1999.
- Provision of fixed speed detection cameras is advancing. One site on the N1 has been working on a trial basis for several months and the National Roads Authority are supervising the erection of poles and mountings on N1, N2, N3, N4 and M50 for the first phase to be ready in July 1999.

84% increase
in speed
notices
issued

increase in
drink driving
detections

new on the
spot fines for
failure to wear
a seat belt

5 new mobile
speed detection
units
operational
since end 1998

⁵ S.I. No. 12 of 1999 Road Traffic Act, 1961 (Section 103) (Offences) Regulations, 1999

Detections made by these units should be processed from August 1999 onwards. This phase of the project will be evaluated over a twelve month period so as to inform decisions about the extension of fixed speed cameras to other areas.

fixed speed cameras planned for August 1999

- Preparations for the operation of evidential breath testing, by the Gardai and the Medical Bureau of Road Safety, are at an advanced stage. The system will be introduced in selected Garda stations in October 1999.

EDUCATION AND INFORMATION

evidential breath testing operational in October 1999

- The National Safety Council (NSC) is completing the development of a road safety resource pack for use in primary schools. The introduction of the pack will be supported by promotional meetings and in-service courses for teachers. It will be rolled out from Autumn 1999, i.e. circulated to some 3,300 schools and presented to teachers' representative groups with a view to full use in schools by September 2000.
- Work on the development of resource material for use by transition year students and teachers in the post-primary sector is being progressed by NSC. Development work is now targeted for completion by 2000, following which the programme will be introduced in schools.
- During 1999 a new national TV and radio campaign titled "Crush" supported by Shell in Ireland and developed jointly with the Department of the Environment in Northern Ireland was launched by NSC. The TV and radio ads focus on the vulnerability of all road users and the media campaign is complemented by local community activities. The campaign will run through 1999 and into 2000 and 2001.
- NSC's new seat belt TV advertisement which draws attention to the need to wear seat belts in the front and rear seats of cars has been showing on national television in June and July 1999. The advertisement is sponsored by Semperit and is designed to complement Garda enforcement in this key area and to coincide with the application of new on-the-spot fines for failure to wear a seat belt.
- NSC has continued to support Junior School Warden schemes nationwide; has provided financial support to local awareness campaigns run by local authorities in Offaly, Roscommon and Longford and is actively engaged in encouraging further such initiatives at local level.
- The possibility of providing practical training for motorcyclists, over and above the formal requirements of the driving test, is being actively examined by the Department of the Environment and Local Government in consultation with local authorities and motorcycling interests.

"nothing on the road is more crushable than you"

"always wear your seat belt, front and rear"

ENGINEERING

- Following an international competitive tendering process, the Minister for the Environment and Local Government awarded a 10 year contract in December 1998 to SGS Ireland Ltd. to establish and operate the private car testing system. Operating as the National Car Testing Service it will be responsible for establishing and operating a national network of 43 dedicated test centres. Testing will commence on 4 January 2000.
- A discussion document on school bus safety is being prepared in consultation with the Minister for Education and Science. The document will seek to engage all relevant interests in developing

car testing will commence on 4 January 2000



practical proposals for enhancing school bus safety. The public consultation will involve inviting comments and submissions from interested parties and a public forum with expert facilitation.

- A review of the international daytime running lights experience (DRL) for vehicles identified a range of assessments of the benefits of DRL. The Department of the Environment and Local Government proposes to continue its participation in work at EU level designed to optimise the benefits of DRL. In the meantime, initiatives to increase voluntary use of DRL, with particular reference to motor cycles, will be considered.
- NRA completed specific accident reduction measures on national roads at 93 locations in 1998. It is intended to complete a comprehensive assessment of this programme (which has operated since 1994) early in 2000.
- By end 1998 traffic calming schemes were in place in 55 towns and villages on the national road network. A further 27 schemes are at the planning stage and NRA Guidelines on traffic calming will be published in July 1999.
- NRA is also providing warning signs at 200 schools on the national network. Installation and commissioning of these signs has commenced and all works are due for completion by end 1999.
- A formal safety audit is now required for all major road improvement schemes and procedural guidelines will be issued later in 1999. Training on safety audit was provided for local authority engineers in the South East region in 1999. This will be extended to other regions later in 1999 and in 2000 and it is envisaged that at least one person in each road design office would be a qualified Safety Auditor. This development will also further assist in carrying out road safety checks such as that carried out by NRA on the Rathnew to Arklow section of the N11, a section of road which showed a high incidence of fatal accidents in recent years. Engineering countermeasures identified by NRA are being implemented by Wicklow County Council.

traffic calming schemes in 55 towns and villages

safety audit for all major road schemes

LEGISLATION/REGULATIONS

- A new Road Traffic Bill is being drafted by the Department of the Environment and Local Government to provide a legislative base for a penalty points system in Ireland. The Bill may also, subject to final consideration, provide some elements of random breath testing and the further refinement of the legal framework for the detection and processing of offences.
- The High Level Group, noting the dependence of a successful and effective system on efficient administrative systems, wishes to emphasise the importance of developments in other key areas that will support a penalty points system. Specifically these are the completion of the National Driver and Vehicle file, the Garda IT process system for road traffic offences and the computerisation of the Courts.
- A public private partnership approach has been decided by the Minister for the Environment and Local Government for the introduction of the new theory test for first time provisional licence applicants. Full implementation of the test is now intended for 2000.

legislation being prepared to introduce penalty points system

ORGANISATION/FINANCE

- Representatives of the National Roads Authority and an Garda Síochána have been appointed by the Minister for the Environment and Local Government to the National Safety Council and



a representative of the Department of Health and Children has joined the High Level Group on Road Safety.

- Consultants have been engaged by the National Safety Council to carry out a provisional cost benefit analysis on the Strategy and to recommend a methodology for the development of a comprehensive cost benefit approach to Irish road safety policies and strategies. The report is expected to be completed in July 1999.
- A Project Board has been established by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform and the Gardaí to oversee the development of an integrated traffic violation processing system. An interim processing system has been developed to replace the existing Garda system which was not "Y2K" compliant. This will be operational in July 1999.
- The Driver Instructor Register is at an advanced stage in the process of attaining quality certification. The Department of the Environment and Local Government is providing financial support to the DIR for this initiative.
- Significant additional resources have been allocated to the driver testing service. The number of driver testers has been increased from 66 in 1998 to 103 in mid-1999. Together with recent productivity agreements and Saturday working, this will increase the testing capacity of the service by some 80%
- The continuation of a very high level of demand for driving tests (over 30% above earlier years) has meant that quality targets for waiting times will take longer than anticipated to achieve. It is now planned to attain a 10 week waiting period before end 2000.

capacity of
driver testing
service improved
by 80%

RESEARCH

- NRA have engaged consultants to carry out national surveys in relation to speeding and seat belt wearing. The surveys will be carried out in Summer 1999 and results published by end year. These results will assist in monitoring progress towards the achievement of the Strategy's supporting targets and will inform future tactical and targeted enforcement and awareness campaigns in these key Strategy action areas. Survey results will also inform the Group in its further monitoring of the Strategy.
- The speed survey will establish speed data on rural sections of national roads and will correlate traffic counter data with this speed data. The survey will also establish speed data on selected non-national roads - regional and county roads, urban arterial roads and residential roads. The survey will be based on free flow conditions where drivers are free to choose their own speeds i.e. where they are not influenced by speeds of other vehicles or by traffic volumes.
- The seat belt survey will establish wearing rates for drivers, front seat passengers and rear seat passengers on the major classes of road on the Irish network. Results will be presented both in summary form and by region and the survey will demonstrate actual as distinct from reported behaviours.
- The Medical Bureau of Road Safety is currently carrying out research work in the area of drugs and driving with reference to international developments and European expert group recommendations.

seat belt and
speed surveys
to be carried
out in 1999



4. RECOMMENDATIONS TOWARDS 2000

Road safety performance in 1998 showed an appreciable improvement over 1997. The road death toll for the first half of 1999 was the second lowest of the decade. While this is encouraging in terms of the attainability of the Government Strategy targets, much further improvement still needs to be made. There can be no such thing as an acceptable level of road accidents: the immediate challenge is however to ensure that fatal and serious injury accidents are reduced by at least 20% by 2002. Desirably more than this level of improvement should be gained.

The High Level Group on Road Safety considers that the basic prioritisation established by the Government Strategy, viz. in the 3 key areas of **speeding, alcohol use and seat belt wearing**, is still valid and is calculated to deliver road safety improvements most quickly in the short term.

The Group also recommends that implementing agencies for the Strategy should seek to respond actively to a number of developments and/or trends evidenced since the commencement of the Strategy. These are as follows:

- a pattern has been re-establishing itself in recent years of a markedly higher number of road deaths occurring in the second half (July-December) of the year;
- despite a reduction in motorcycle and pedestrian deaths in 1998, driver and passenger deaths increased;
- a growing proportion of car driver (7.3% in 1997 → 10.9% in 1998) and car passenger (6.9% in 1997 → 9.1% in 1998) deaths is occurring in the younger (particularly 15-24) age group.

The Group considers that the above developments/trends warrant a strong focusing of action by agencies on driver (and in relation to seat belt wearing, passenger) behaviour. In addition, a better understanding is required of the causes of increased involvement by young people in road accidents (which may be especially marked in certain

regions). Further study of this phenomenon should be undertaken as a priority.

Shared responsibility for road safety was emphasised by the Government Strategy which called for support of the Strategy by local authorities, and by voluntary, commercial and community interests. The Group underlines the importance of continued public and political support for the Strategy and for the measures being taken towards achieving the primary target of reducing death and injury on Irish roads by a minimum of 20% by 2002. Well designed awareness and education programmes, as well as active communication of information by all the road safety agencies will assist in maintaining this support.



APPENDIX: TIMETABLE FOR KEY STRATEGY ACTIONS 1999-2002

	1999	2000	2001	2002
ENFORCEMENT				
• Continue Operation Lifesaver (Garda)	√	√	√	√
• deploy additional mobile detection units (Garda)	√			
• deploy fixed speed cameras (Garda and NRA)				
• pilot project on the N1 national route	√			
• progressive extension countrywide		√	√	√
• operate evidential breath testing (Garda, MBRS)				
• preparation and introduction	√			
• extension countrywide		√	√	√
EDUCATION AND INFORMATION				
• new resource material for input to the primary school curriculum (NSC)	√	√		
• new material and programmes for the post-primary sector (NSC)		√		
• decide on practical initial training for motorcyclists (DOELG)	√			
• develop awareness campaigns on speeding, drink driving and seat belt wearing (NSC)	√	√	√	√
• more actively support initiatives at local authority and community levels (NSC)	√	√	√	√
ENGINEERING				
• support development and introduction of new vehicle safety measures at EU level (DOELG)	√	√	√	√
• implement new vehicle safety measures at national level (DOELG)	√	√	√	√
• introduce compulsory roadworthiness testing for cars (DOELG)		√		
• decide on use of daytime running lights (DOELG)	√			
• publish consultation paper on bus safety (DOELG)	√			
• complete low cost remedial measures at 320 high accident locations on national roads (NRA)	√	√	√	√
• implement 5 year programme for traffic calming on the national network (NRA)	√	√	√	√
• develop and extend Safety Audit and Safety Check procedures (NRA)	√	√	√	√
• actively deploy ice-detection monitoring system (NRA)	√	√	√	√
• complete Mapinfo GIS system to enable better logging of accident data on non-national roads (LGCSB)	√			
• implement a programme of accident counter-measures for non-national roads (LA's with NRA assistance)		√	√	√



	1999	2000	2001	2002
LEGISLATION/REGULATIONS				
• develop a penalty points system for driving offences (DOELG)				
• preparation	√			
• legislation	√			
• regulations to require the carrying of a driving licence while driving (DOELG)	√			
• extend on-the-spot fines to a wide range of offences (DOELG)	√			
• consider and decide on provision for random breath testing (DOELG)	√			
• introduce a written theory test (DOELG)		√		
• further refinement of the legal framework for the detection and processing of offences (DOELG)	√			
ORGANISATION				
• examine and decide on scope for improving arrangement for road safety functions at national level (DOELG)	√			
• develop a comprehensive financial profile of road safety in Ireland (DOELG)	√	√		
• upgrade Garda and other IT systems relevant to enforcement (Garda and DOJELR with DOELG support)	√	√		
• complete computerisation of national driver file (DOELG)			√	
• obtain quality certification for Driver Instructor Register (DIR)	√			
• reduce waiting times for driving tests (DOELG)		√		
• examine and decide on revised arrangements for testing samples for drugs (MBRS)	√			
RESEARCH				
• carry out a comprehensive national speed survey (NRA)	√			
• carry out a national seat belt wearing survey (NRA)	√			
• advance research in relation to drugs and driving in Ireland (MBRS)	√			
• prepare a comprehensive programme for road safety research (NRA)	√			

