

## LECTURE - 9

### ROAD SAFETY: INITIATIVES, MEASURES AND HURDLES

**Road safety** incorporates the development and management of road infrastructure, provision of safer vehicles, legislations and law enforcement, mobility planning, provision of health and hospital services, child safety and urban land use planning etc. Its ambit spans engineering aspects of both roads and vehicles on one hand and provision of health and hospital services for trauma cases on the other. Road safety is a shared, multi sectoral, responsibility of the govt and a range of civil society stakeholders.

**Current scenario of road safety in India:** India has the second largest road network in the world with over 3 million km of roads of which 60% are paved. These roads make a vital contribution to India's economy. On the whole, the facilities for the road users are not up to the mark, leading to a high toll of the death victims. Recently, there is a growing concern over the road crash problem. With the advancement of technology, the most developed projects undertaken along with the real estate are the massive road building projects. But while new roads are being built, faster and faster automobiles are also being invented in high numbers making road safety a crucial question. Road safety is emerging as a major social concern in the country. The statistics are mind boggling with an average mortality rate (death rate) of 100,000 persons dying in road accidents. According to a survey from WHO, each year road traffic injuries take away lives of 1.2 million men, women, and children around the globe and injure many more. The death toll is on the higher side for the countries where pedestrians, motorcyclists and passengers are vulnerable and vehicles lack the safety norms, like India.

#### **There are 5 pillars of road safety**

*Pillar-1 Road Safety Management:* Strengthen institutional capacity to further national road safety efforts.

*Pillar-2 Safer Roads & Mobility:* Improve the safety of road networks for the benefit of all road users.

*Pillar-3 Safer Vehicles:* Improve vehicle safety by encouraging harmonization of relevant global standards and Mechanisms.

*Pillar-4 Safer Road Users:* Develop comprehensive programmes to improve road user behaviour.

*Pillar-5 Post-crash Response:* Improve health and other systems to provide appropriate emergency treatment and longer-term rehabilitation for crash victims.

### Let's peep into some India related facts:

1. 85% of all road accident deaths occur in developing countries and nearly half in the Asia-Pacific region.
2. India accounts for about 10 percent of road accident fatalities (death) worldwide.
3. An estimated 1,275,000 persons are grievously injured on the road every year.
4. Social cost of annual accidents in India has been estimated at \$ 11,000.
5. Professionalism in driver training is absent, proportion of untrained drivers is continually on the rise and a positive driving culture is lacking.

Although both the civilians and the Govt. officials are well informed about the urgency of the burning topic "Road Safety", still there are many hurdles in the path to implement "Road Safety" safely.

### HURDLES TO ROAD SAFETY

- **Negligence of civilians:** Civilians, the main victim, who make a huge hue and cry about the issue are responsible for lagging behind in the safety measures as these people on the first hand do not follow the already devised rules. One can easily spot people jumping traffic lights, driving while drunk, driving recklessly at supersonic speeds. Wearing seat belts is assumed as if they have been tied with the car seats. There is a need to understand that with such a vast population, it is the civil society on the first hand that has to play a crucial role in achieving success in this area.
- **Pathetic condition of roads:** Poor infrastructure has lead to poor road designs. Roads are built without keeping their functionality in mind. The areas adjoining the new roads are made vacant to built broad roads, only to find that they get swarmed with traffic rush in no time. Roads should be made with proper planning keeping in mind their future utility, as vehicle population also grows with time.
- **Unsafe Vehicle Design:** Vehicles designed for Indian roads are not up to the International Standards. Safety norms are not even close to international level. Even if some luxury cars have them, they run the pockets dry. There is a need to look for viable solution in this respect.
- **Under implementation of Road Safety Standards:** Road are not well informed with the markings and signals. Line markings are not printed on all roads. Traffic signals are used for spiting and littering. Road barriers and other equipments are seen dwindling here and there on the roads.
- **Indifferent Government:** Government has implemented million dollar projects on building roads but it lacks proper planning. Tenders are opened for the known contractors only without checking the past records. Moreover, it is really ironical to note that the

same contractors build roads abroad with 10 yrs warranty and when they build roads in India, They get washed away with the slightest showers.

- **Lack of Laws and their proper enforcements:** No Proper laws have been devised and those devised are not meant and dealt properly. Just drive as you like and if you happen to kill someone, just grease a few palms and walk into the sunset. Such is the height of corruption in India.
- **Lack of Emergency Services:** Roads lack any facility for emergency services. In case of an accident there is no provision for first aid treatment near the intersections. Victims have to cost their lives as doctors and hospitals are usually not nearby.

## **INITIATIVES AND MEASURES**

Different sectors of society should come forward and join hands in this direction to make Indian roads a safer journey.

### **1. Government and the Public Sector can work on:**

- Development and implementation of effective road safety policies.
- Accountability in meeting road safety objectives and to ensure the effective use of resources.
- Funds for road safety programs.

### **2. Local and Regional Governments can:**

- Take a leading role in coordinating the road safety effort of all relevant agencies and community groups within their particular administrative area. These activities should be consistent with the National Road Safety Plan, and coordinate activity across all relevant agencies in that geographic area.
- Ensure that planning of local facilities and residential areas effectively takes account of the road safety needs of the community.
- Where possible, fund and implement road safety programs and initiatives.
- Ensure effective policies for the control and enforcement of liquor laws.

### **3. Communities and Cultural or Ethnic Organizations can:**

- Provide support and leadership for road safety campaigns and initiatives.
- Demonstrate a concern for the number of road deaths occurring and a commitment to foster improvements.
- Persuade various communities to accept a greater participatory role in road safety improvements.
- Work with other organisations in providing road safety education/publicity and other road safety programmes

### **4. Education Sector can:**

- Make a formal commitment to promote effective road safety education in schools and pre-schools so that appropriate behaviour is fostered from early age.
- Develop links between schools and other agencies, such as the MOT, NRSC and police, in relation to road safety.
- Assist in the life-long education of road users.

**5. Media can:**

- Enhance community awareness and understanding of the causal factors and real costs of road crashes.
- Support road safety initiatives through responsible and objective reporting.
- Influence societal changes which lead to a reduction in unacceptable driver behaviour and poor attitudes.

**6. Health Agencies and Professionals can:**

- Ensure development of effective emergency medical/services.
- Advise patients on their fitness to use the road, including the effects of prescribed drugs and medication on road user performance.
- Provide feedback from injury assessment to improve vehicle occupant protection and road safety policy.
- Provide health promotion road safety programmes.

**7. Transport and Land-Use Planners can:**

- Adopt effective and safe traffic management measures in planning transport and land-use developments.
- Pay particular attention to the safety requirements of people with disabilities, older people, children, pedestrians, bicycle riders and other non -motorised road users in the planning task.

**8. Road Engineers and Highway Authorities can:**

- Improve the safety performance of the road network by ensuring that planning, design, construction and maintenance places a high priority on safety outcomes.
- Apply crash reduction and crash prevention techniques to create safer road networks for the future.
- Review and safety audit existing, rehabilitated and new roads to eliminate unnecessary hazardous locations and misleading/absent markings.

**9. Insurance Industry can:**

- Assist in the development, sponsorship and funding of crash prevention programmes.
- Provide premium incentives as a means of encouraging and rewarding safer behaviour.
- Provide feedback to government and regenerative crash trends and outcomes to assist in the further development of road safety policy.

**10. Driver Training Providers can:**

- Require all learner vehicles to display signs.
- Equip learner and novice drivers with the necessary skills, attitudes and behaviour needed to drive safely on our roads.
- Maintain and foster a high standard of driver training, instruction and professionalism.
- Promote and foster the upgrading of driving skills amongst drivers, particularly drivers of heavy and public service vehicles.

- Establish an Association and enhance industry professionalism by developing a Code of Providers teaching materials, Driving Instructors training programmes, etc., for their members.

**11. Individual Road Users can:**

- Attain a greater understanding, awareness, and practice of safe behavior and skills.
- Make a personal commitment to improve road safety by adopting more courteous and considerate road behaviour and demonstrating care for the safety of others.

**Road Safety Initiatives**

**STEPS TAKEN BY MINISTRY:**

The Ministry of Road Transportation and Highways (M.O.R.T.H.) is taking a number of steps to remedy the situation. Road safety Cell of the Department of Road Transport and Highways deals with the "National Road Safety Plan". This unit prepares and implements "Annual Road Safety Plan". It also compiles road accident data and interacts with the states on the issues of road safety.

**Important Schemes administered by Road Safety cell are:**

- Publicity Programs
- Grants-in-aid to Voluntary Organizations for organizing road safety programs
- National Highway Accident Relief Service Scheme
- Refresher Training to Heavy Vehicle Drivers in Unorganized Sector
- Setting up of Model Driving Training school
- Within the M.O.R.T.H.s massive road sector development program, the govt. is working closely with agencies: World Bank, Asian Development Bank to improve road safety.

**Steps Taken:**

A number have steps have been taken to spread road safety culture across the country.

1. The most noticeable project under taken by the Indian Government has been the "*National Highway Development Program*", "*Rural Roads Project*" under the leadership of Mr. Atal Bihari Vajpayee.
2. "*NGOs*" have come up in many cities to deal with this problem at their levels.
3. "*Police Departments*" hold road safety weeks, painting competitions.
4. "*Road Safety Cell*" of the ministry has also been working closely to strengthen institutions and organizations. They have come up with an awards scheme for awarding organizations/individuals making outstanding contribution in the fields.

## **BODIES INVOLVED IN ROAD SAFETY**

### **The Global Road Safety Partnership (G.R.S.P.)**

G.R.S.P. brings together governments and governmental agencies, the private sector and civil society organizations to address road safety issues in low and middle income countries. G.R.S.P. is a hosted program of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (I.F.R.C.), based in Geneva.

### **Road Safety Patrol (R.S.P.)**

The R.S.P. is involved in the educational aspect of Road Safety. The R.S.P. Scheme commenced way back in 1951, and was flagged off from the New Bharda High School at Fort, Mumbai. This scheme is now being implemented in 511 schools and extends to 68,548 R.S.P. students. The students are taught about road safety aspects and trained in Drill and Parade. They are also taught leadership qualities and discipline. The R.S.P. scheme inculcates road discipline in school-going children, who in turn educate their families and fellow students.

### **Traffic Warden Scheme**

The Traffic Warden Scheme was started in Mumbai way back in 1988. This scheme invites people from all walks of life to enrol as Traffic Wardens. The Traffic Wardens assist the Traffic Police in controlling pedestrian movement at important junctions, thus aiding the smooth flow of Traffic. Their contribution during major festivals in controlling the mammoth traffic in Mumbai is noteworthy.

## **ROAD SAFETY TIPS**

Road safety is a result of contributing efforts from all the sectors of the society including both civilians and Govt. officials. In addition to the human sufferings, the estimated costs of the road injuries are a noticeable amount in GNP (Gross National Production) per annum. So, some tips can be fruitful in this direction.

### **Few important Road Safety Tips are mentioned below:**

1. Don't use your mobile phone whilst driving
2. Belt up in the back
3. Don't drink and drive
4. Always adhere to speed limits
5. Take special care about children, senior citizens and pedestrians.
6. Don't drive if tired.
7. Pedestrians should walk cautiously.
8. Always observe and anticipate other road users.
9. Keep your distances.
10. Always wear helmets and seat belts

Literally, "Road Rage" is a term used to refer to the violent incidents caused by stress while driving on high traffic zones on roadways. It is usually associated with "Aggressive Driving". But, in lay man's language, "Road Rage" can be defined as an incident in which an angry or impatient motorist or passenger intentionally injures or kills another motorist, passenger, or pedestrian, or attempts or threatens to injure or kill another motorist, passenger, or pedestrian. "Road Rage" often occurs with exchange of swear words and furious shouts at the fellow commuter.

It has been found that most of the drivers have a feeling of "Road Rage" because it is a cultural norm. Anger and frustration while driving on Indian roads comes naturally which translates into "Road Rage". People learn this behaviour from childhood when being driven by parents and adults. In day to day life, more of the incidents can be experienced during peak travelling hours, during fair weather, traffic congestion, driving habits, noise levels, time constraints "Alcohol" has many a times been found to be associated with many of the incidents.

It is usually emphasized that "Road Rage" and "Aggressive Driving" are not synonymous. "Road Rage" is uncontrolled anger that results in violence or threatened violence on the road; it is Criminal Behaviour. These are serious crimes that just happen to occur within the roadways environment. "Aggressive Driving" does not rise to the level of criminal behaviour. "Aggressive Driving" includes tailgating, abrupt lane changes, and speeding, alone or in combination. These potentially dangerous behaviours are traffic offenses, but are not criminal behaviour. In fact, "Road Rage" can be distinguished from any other traffic incident by its "Wilful and Criminal" nature.

**In general, "Road Raging" involves menace provoking activities including:**

1. Speeding and Aggressive Acceleration.
2. Tailgating.
3. Cutting others off.
4. Weaving in and out of traffic.
5. Forming a "convoy" to block access to a traffic lane.
6. Honking the vehicle's horn or flashing lights excessively.
7. Rude gestures.
8. Verbal abuse.
9. Deliberately hitting another person, vehicle or object with one's own vehicle.
10. Hitting a person or vehicle with a weapon other than a vehicle.
11. Threatening to use a deadly weapon.
12. Revengeful feeling.

"Road Rage" is considered as a menace because it can lead to physical injuries and in some cases it can lead to death also.

"Road Rage" is a serious act and may be seen as a violation of property rights. One of the best way to avoid becoming a victim of "Road Rage" is to avoid responding, avoid making eye-

contact. It might happen that what seems to be harassment in one spot may be a simple mistake only. Don't allow driving to become a competition.

Before all, legislations should be made more clear and stringent. Unambiguous laws and penalties are needed and public needs to be educated about its legal consequences. Driver education courses should be made more approachable and taught seriously.

## **INTERVENTIONS TO REVERSE ROAD RAGE**

Rage" is a relatively serious act, which jeopardizes the public safety. Hence, there seems to be a dire need to enlist various methods that can be implemented to reverse "Road Rage". These include:

### **1. Education through Campaigns**

Road Rage campaigns can be run locally for public information. In this direction, a "Road Rage Prevention Curriculum" can be designed covering aspects like driving education, information on road rage prevention etc. Cut outs and templates can be designed to complement the message. These can be sponsored by merchants.

### **2. Enforcement of Traffic Laws**

Stringent Enforcement of laws can no doubt lend a hand at a regional, state and municipal level. Laws can be enforced using unmarked cars, plain clothed police officers, video cameras etc. Various bodies and agencies (Road Transport Authority, Central Police, Traffic Police, Highway Authority, construction agencies, DDA) can join hands and pool in their resources to combat the menace.

### **3. Self-Help Methods/ Co-operative Programs**

These programs can help in distributing handy resources personally to drivers to increase driver awareness, reducing stress levels. Tapes, books, classes, surveys and self tests can lend a helping hand in running these programs effectively.

### **4. Penalties for Offenders/Legislations**

Poor existing laws addressing the issues combined with offenders who try to play with the ambiguous wordings of the laws, in combination with the interpretations by Law Enforcement Officers act as barriers in passing Aggressive Driving Legislations. Although penalties including: higher fines, mandatory jail time, loss of license, Warning letters have been formulated but they are not taken seriously as a learning lessons. Drivers pay the hefty amounts and think that they have got the permission to continue with the wrong. They should realize their mistake and discontinue with it.

### **5. Call-in Cellular Systems**

As in abroad, a number of hotlines can be installed to allow citizens to report Aggressive Driving incidents directly to local law enforcement officers. But, it should be kept in mind that not to misuse the numbers.

### **6. Intelligent Transportation System**

Such systems can effectively deter Road Rage with intersection cameras. The "Red Light



Runners" and "Speeders" can be captured on camera and later use the photographs to counter the offenders. This method makes it possible to detect the offenders without the physical presence of the officers on the spot.

#### 7. **Internet and Media**

Radio and Television announcements can help in increasing public awareness. Internet can prove to be an effective tool with abundant resources. Sites with "Report It" feature are increasing in numbers. These sites are loaded with "Driver Improvement Pages" and "Self assessment Quizzes".

#### 8. **Driver Education**

The motorists on a whole are ill informed about the originators of Aggressive Driving. Campaigns can be run to teach drivers their own behaviours and how to deal with the aggressive behaviour of other drivers.

### **Do's and Don'ts of Road Rage**

#### **Do's**

- Do make an apology if you have done a mistake.
- Do try to be seated in the car in case of a conflict.
- Do tune in to your favourite music to feel relax while driving.
- Do try to use public transports.
- Do drive within the posted limits.
- Do look for less congested routes.
- Do make an attempt to get out of the way in case of a conflict.
- Do make it a point to report aggressive driving to the concerned officials.
- Do put as much distance between you and others as possible.
- Do stay behind a suspected drunk driver.

#### **Don'ts**

- Don't allow yourself to become distracted by talking on your cellular phone, eating, drinking or putting on makeup.
- Don't make and respond to any angry gesture or action.
- Don't rush if you are getting late.
- Don't use abusive language while driving.
- Don't cut in front of any vehicle.
- Don't challenge by speeding.
- Don't make an eye contact.
- Don't tailgate.
- Don't make matters worse by triggering confrontations.
- Don't try to stop the vehicle between roads.
- Don't attempt to act to the capacity of the police.

Indian "Road Ragers" use absurd sentences like: '*Sadak kya tere baap ki hai?*', '*Bahar aon kya gaadi se?*', '*Pata hai main kaun hoon?*' Legally, Government has formulated laws relating to "Compensation Cases for rash and negligent driving under IPC Section: 279, 337, and 338, but looking at the present condition of the roads, they all seem to be going in vain.

At the end, please realize that it is the attitude which is important to prevent road accidents and make our roads safe. Let us take a pledge to make our cities safe and more livable.