

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR HOME AFFAIRS
BY DEPUTY G.C.L. BAUDAINS OF ST. CLEMENT
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 17th APRIL 2012**

Question

Would the Minister advise what percentage of road accidents in Jersey are directly caused by excessive speed and, if above the UK accepted figure of 3%, detail the reasons for this?

Would he also state the number, in percentage terms, of accidents directly caused by a failure to wear a seatbelt and clarify the mechanism whereby such a failure is deemed the cause of an accident?

Answer

These questions clearly relate to a letter from the Deputy, dated 2nd March 2012, in the Jersey Evening Post in which he criticised the Police for “the nonsense written about the causes of road accidents”. Unfortunately, it seems that the Deputy has misunderstood the whole purpose of the current road safety initiative and I welcome this opportunity to set the record straight.

For the avoidance of doubt, the “Fatal Four” campaign run by the States of Jersey Police is clearly focussed on reducing the level of injuries and fatalities caused by excessive speed, drink-driving, using mobile phones whilst driving and not wearing a seat belt. In order to demonstrate the point, I would like to quote from the States of Jersey Police press releases that launched the road safety initiative:

The fatal four are the most significant factors in terms of injuries following road traffic collisions.

We take road safety in Jersey very seriously and we are committed, together with our partners in the Honorary Police and together with other agencies, to making sure that we do all that we can to reduce the number of people hurt on our roads. What we have dubbed the “fatal four” are the biggest contributory factors in terms of fatal and serious injuries, with speed being the worst.

They are the four biggest causes of death and serious injuries on the roads – and this Wednesday officers will be out in force to educate islanders of those dangers.

My direct answers to the Deputy’s specific questions, therefore, are:

The most recent statistical release produced by the Department of Transport on reported road casualties in Great Britain actually states that

‘exceeding the speed limit was reported as a factor in 5 per cent of accidents, but these accidents involved 14 per cent of fatalities. At least one of exceeding the speed limit and

travelling too fast for the conditions was reported in 12 per cent of all accidents and these accidents accounted for 24 per cent of all fatalities.’¹

This is the whole point of the ‘Fatal Four’ campaign. The issue is not how many road traffic collisions (RTCs) are caused by speed but rather that speed is a key factor in determining the severity of an RTC and any associated casualties.

In Jersey, it is estimated that exceeding the speed limit was a contributory factor in about 4% of all road traffic collisions resulting in injury in 2010, whilst at least one of *exceeding the speed limit* and *inappropriate speed for the prevailing conditions* was reported in about 8% of all injury RTCs. Unfortunately, these collisions where speed was considered to be a contributory factor accounted for one of three deaths and nearly one in seven of the serious injuries sustained in RTCs involving motor vehicles in 2010.

No RTCs were caused by a failure to wear a seatbelt nor have States of Jersey Police ever made such a claim. Sadly, the relevant facts to the Police campaign are that five people who either died or sustained serious injuries as a result of RTCs in Jersey last year were not wearing seatbelts.

The Police stated from the outset that the purpose of the ‘Fatal Four’ initiative was to save lives and prevent injuries on our roads and I trust that they enjoy the full support of the whole House in this endeavour.

¹ Reported Road Casualties Great Britain: 2010 Annual Report, Department of Transport. The 2011 report will be published later this year. It is important to acknowledge that the report states that the contributory factors are intended to provide some insight into why and how road accidents occur. The factors are largely subjective opinion and are not necessarily the result of extensive investigation. Some factors are less likely to be recorded since evidence may not be available after the event. While this information is valuable in helping to identify ways of improving safety, care should be taken in its interpretation.