

Development of Ethical Rules for Road Traffic.

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Summary

Ethical rules are common in a number of different areas in the society. This applies to the health sector, the lawyers, companies and organizations. For the road traffic on public roads, ethical rules have not been developed for common use in Scandinavia. Remedies related to the large number of injuries on the roads may be easier to realize and develop, seen from an ethical angle.

The basic fundament for the ethical rules is that life and health can never be exchanged for other benefits within the society. This applies also to factors as mobility and driving joy on the road system.

The ethical rules will cover the traffic participants and their behaviour, traffic competence and driving ability, the design and maintenance of the vehicles and roads. Further traffic safety is under influence from actors which do promote unsafe behaviour or sell products reducing the safety, if used in the cars during driving. The media have further quite some influence on driver attitudes and thereby road safety. Parts of the ethical rules will therefore also apply to the journalists and the media.

When an injury or death occurs on the road, the ethical response is to do remedies were relevant. This may be related to the road, the vehicle, careful behaviour by driver or the speed limit or speed control at the road. The speed is probably the single factor having most influence on the safety on the roads.

An ethical set of rules must further address the overall responsibility. This has to be defined and the different actors and institutions must have clear defined tasks and responsibilities.

Further the overall safety authority has to expose when participants or companies act in conflict with the ethical rules. This authority has also to keep an eye on new laws and regulations to make sure these are in accordance to the ethical rules for safe road traffic.

Introduction

We have a large number of ethical rules in the community. This does apply to the lawyers (1), the doctors and a large number of other areas and companies. Connected to the road traffic, however, no ethical rules exist in Scandinavia. Here we find companies which support speedy driving, the sales of ATC alarms, journalists which support vehicles driving as a "bullet shot out of a canon". We find a transport minister opening a new main road which is not as safe as it ought to be. And we find newspapers with articles promoting unsafe speedy driving on the roads. (2)

The conclusion is that we need a set of ethical rules (7) for the road traffic to lift the ethical behaviour on the roads up to accepted ethical level in the rest of the society.

Main areas

The basic fundament for the ethical rules is that life and health can never be exchanged for other benefits within the society. (3) This applies also to factors as mobility and driving joy on the road system. The other areas covered by the ethical rules are the traffic participants, the road builders, the vehicles and manufacturing companies as well as the sales organisations. In addition to these areas the media, the authorities and the politicians have quite some influence on road safety and must therefore be included in the ethical rules.

Remedies to accidents

When an injury or death occurs on the road, the ethical response is to do remedies were relevant. This may be related to the road, the vehicle, careful behaviour by driver or the speed limit or speed control at the road. The speed is probably the single factor having most influence on the safety on the roads. In 2007 more then 50 % of all fatal injuries on Norwegian roads had too high speed as one of the reasons for the accidents.

Traffic participants

The main ethical rule for the traffic participants is to follow rules and regulations by being careful and taking care in all actions on the roads. The traffic does require full concentration and the participant must not be disturbed by others or by instruments in the vehicle. (4) To be a good and careful driver, good teaching and practical training is needed. This is relevant for the first driving license as well as for the renewing of the license

during a long life span. The Norwegian practice of issuing a driver license to the holder is 100 years does not take care of the need for renewing the competence. An evaluation of all Norwegian death accidents in 2006 and 2007 revealed that in 66 to 75 % of the accidents has limited driving competence been a part reason for the accident. Why does not the Ministry take a new review of the need for added competence before an age of 100 years?

Safe roads

The road design has to take care of possible errors by the drivers. The picture shows a road with mid barrier to prevent a vehicle to enter the wrong lane. Further the sides of the road up to the rock cuttings are protected by smooth earth fillings. The road has further light poles which are protected by the middle barriers.



The roads have further to be maintained and kept in a good safe condition summer and winter, and not used as a playing ground for children or adults. The use of public roads for speed and fun can not be regarded as ethical according to the ethical standard in the rest of the society.

The pedestrians have to be kept away from the vehicles if possible. This may be done by separate pedestrian passages or areas.

Safe vehicles

Most new cars have been improved for the protection of the persons inside the car in the case of an accident. The car design is further improved making the driving more easy, more safe and the car more pleasant to travel with.



These improvements may result in fewer accidents and less injuries if the drivers are careful in the traffic. If the drivers are playing as a child in the traffic, the result could easily be reduced safety. In the marketing of new vehicles we do find sellers actively promoting speed and fun on the roads. The added safety in the new designs may easily be lost if the driver takes more risks in his/her driving attitude.

Control

All parts having the responsibility to control vehicles, roads or drivers, must perform this enforcement efficiently with a safe traffic as the prime purpose.

In all communities relevant control has to be performed. We find the need for this in all areas and at all levels. This does also apply to the road traffic as well. In Norway less than 1 % of the roads are controlled by ATC photo boxes. Further the speedy drivers are allowed to buy and use GPS photo box alarms to inform when the car is approaching an ATC. The next step is to arrange two and two ATC with 3 to 10 km distance along a rather straight part of the roads. The average speed between the two ATC is then measured. With all the 400 photo boxes arranged in this way still less than 1 % of the total road length will be controlled and the ATC alarms tells the drivers about the average measurements.

Further the police will control at least 1.8 million car drivers for speed and alcohol. This is around 72 % of the total number of cars. This means that in average a car is not controlled each year. This total level of control is close to nothing. Around 50 % of all vehicles on the roads drive at any time over allow speed limit. This confirms the Authorities preference for freedom to speed and fun on the roads in Norway. From an ethical point of view this is not according to the ethical level in the rest of the community.

Black box in each car

The alternative to ATC is to install a black box in each car based on GPS. The black box has included a data logger recording the time, place and speed when this is over the speed limit on the actual road. This black box may be controlled by the police on a regular basis and after an accident. This system would include 100 % of the roads and probably remove most of the speedy driving on the roads. The technology is more or less available and what is lacking is the will of the Authorities to really improve the safety on the roads.

Promotion of safe and careful driving

The promotion of careful driving and safe traffic is quite important. When the ministry vehicle or the parliament leader of the transport committee drives too fast, this is not a good message to the rest of us. The responsibility for this promotion applies to sellers of vehicles, media, vehicle organizations, the Road Traffic Authority, Department of Transport and the Parliament.

In the media we find a group of motor journalists which are promoting speedy driving with vehicles having large motors. This attitude is not ethical related to a careful driving on the roads.

Road Traffic Authorities

The Road Traffic Authority is responsible for the overall safety on the roads. (6) This authority is further responsible for making clear everyone's responsibility, related to road safety and that this responsibility is actually taken care of.

In Norway we do have a lot of authorities responsible for safety within the petroleum industry, the aviation, the railroads, the onshore industry, for food inspections, for the Radiation safety, etc. The main purpose for these authorities is the safety of the people working within and depending of the different areas. The total number of killed and injured in all these areas is less than the killed and injured on the Norwegian roads every year. Why do we not have a Road Traffic Authority?

When you as 18 year old get your driving license this is valid until you are 100 years old. From an age of 70 years you have to get doctors verification that you are suitable for driving. Nobody will check your driving competence and knowledge about the new traffic roles and new traffic signs. Would a prudent, responsible Road Traffic Authority accept such a system?

The Road Traffic Authority can not avoid the individual accident. All travellers on the roads will still have influence. The Authority having focus on road safety, however, will act as a watchdog towards all activities reducing the safety. The positive work towards a careful driving, safe roads and safe vehicles will have first priority. Some of the responsible actors have been promoting unsafe driving attitudes. This activity has been performed without any authority seriously trying to stop this activity.

To safeguard a first priority on safety, the Road Traffic Authority should be organized independent of the Ministry of Transport.

The time may come when the freedom to speed and fun on the roads are replaced by freedom from accidents and death (5) by careful driving in safe vehicles on safe roads. If this is given full active support by the authorities, the political parties, BMW and the other car sellers, the media and all others, the result could be a real reduction of the number of killed and injured on our roads.

Proposed ethical rules (3)

1. General

1.1. Life and health for all users of the road shall be protected by giving safety first priority in relation to mobility, speed and auto joy.

1.2. When an injury occurs, the reasons behind shall be analysed, giving the possibility to correct for any system errors, errors with the infrastructure, the vehicle, the maximum allowed speed, or lack of competence or wrong attitudes with the participants involved.

2. Road participants

- 2.1. Each road participant shall apply to the traffic law and regulations.
- 2.2. The road participant must not be distracted by others, the surroundings or equipment at or in the vehicle.
- 2.3. The authority having the overall responsibility for traffic education and control of driving competence has to include the use of new developments in education as well as new traffic rules and vehicle designs. The responsibility does include all ages of traffic participants.
- 2.4. Parents, the school and those responsible for the teaching of driving must correct for the influence from data plays during their childhood. The influence from these plays has to be removed before the new driver gets the driver licence.

3. Infrastructure

- 3.1 In the case of repeated accidents, the road owner shall modify the road to minimize new accidents.
- 3.2. The road infrastructure shall be designed in a way that in the case of errors by road participants, the consequence shall be minimized.
- 3.3. The road infrastructure must be maintained and developed in a way that the safety level is kept up to date.
- 3.4. The road infrastructure is built for traffic purposes. The roads must not be used for play and fun, either by children or by adults.
- 3.5. Pedestrians and bicycles must to a best degree, be kept on separate areas away from the car traffic.

4. Vehicles

- 4.1. The driving place of vehicles shall be designed and equipped in a way that the driver has good overview around the vehicle and is not distracted during driving.
- 4.2. The design of the vehicles shall protect the persons inside the vehicle and have minimal impact on others in the surroundings.
- 4.3. Vehicles designed for use on public roads shall be equipped with motors not stronger than needed for careful driving on the roads.
- 4.4. Vehicles may be equipped with instruments stopping a person influenced by alcohol or other drugs from using the vehicle.
- 4.5. Vehicles may be equipped with a data logger, (a black box) recording the speed and actual speed limit. Recorded data shall be available for the police in the case of an accident or at traffic controls.
- 4.6. Vehicles may include systems preventing the driver from driving at a speed over allowed speed limit at the road. (Intelligent speed adaptation, ISA)

5. Other responsible parts

- 5.1. All parts having the responsibility to control vehicles, roads or drivers, must perform this enforcement efficiently with a safe traffic as the prime purpose.
- 5.2. All with an overall influence on road traffic has a responsibility to promote careful driving and safe traffic in all their activities. This applies to sellers of vehicles, media, and car organizations, Road Traffic Authority, Department of Transport and the Parliament.
- 5.3. The media must promote attitudes toward careful driving on the roads. This applies to the medias own coverage as well as the advertisements and films presented.

5.4. The Road Traffic Authority is responsible for the overall safety on the roads. This authority is further responsible for making clear everyone's responsibility, related to road safety and that this responsibility is actually taken care of.

6. Reactions on breaches

6.1. In the case of clear breaches of these ethical rules, the Road Traffic Authority is responsible to make this clear to the person, company or institution and ask for no repeat.

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