

Pragmatic ways to prevent road crashes

[Transportation](#), [Road](#)



Driving may be the most dangerous activity with which we are involved. Government estimated the death of 4, 000 people and injury of 5000 per annum but according to study of WHO in 2009 the yearly death is more than 20, 000. Worldwide, the number of people killed in road traffic accident each year is estimated at almost 1. 2 million, while the number injured could be as high as 50 million.

Road traffic injuries constitute a major public health and development crisis, and are predicted to increase manifold gradually. With the number of vehicles rapidly rising in developing countries, road accident is quickly worsening in low and middle-income countries and is on its way to becoming the third leading cause of death and disabilities as epidemic by the year 2020 (WHO 2000) after two deadly diseases Ischaemic heart disease and Unipolar major depression. The total number of road traffic deaths worldwide and injuries is forecast to rise by some 65% between 2000 and 2020, and in least developed and developing countries deaths are expected to increase by as much as 80%.

Another statistics revealed that Bangladesh has one of the highest fatality rates internationally in road accidents, over 100 deaths per 10, 000 motor vehicles.

Some US government departments campaign in 1997, encouraging the removal of the word “ accident” from the traffic management vocabulary and suggested replacing it with the word “ crash.” Because “ Motor vehicle crashes and injuries are predictable, preventable events. Continued use of the word “ accident” promotes the concept that these events are outside of

human influence or control. In fact, they are predictable results of specific actions”. “ We can identify their causes and take action to avoid them. These are not ‘acts of God,’ but predictable results of the laws of physics”.

The profiles of fatal road accidents or crash are, - fatal accidents mainly occur on national highways; predominantly involve vehicles hitting pedestrians. The highest number of fatal accidents by far involve heavy vehicles like buses, minibuses and Trucks). The highest number of fatalities per accident occurs when vehicles collide head on and killed predominantly young persons.

The causes of Road accident are identified from the studies are 1. reckless driving; 2. over- speeding; 3. over- loading; 4. vehicular defects; 5. lack of knowledge and consciousness of the road users; 6. hazardous roads & road environments; 7. lack of training to the drivers; 8. lack of training of maintenance of vehicles; 9. poor implementation of Traffic rules & regulations; 10. driving under influence of alcohol, drugs etc.; 11. Non use of helmets, seat belts etc.; 12. walk on the roads instead of using the footpath; 13. cross the road without using the foot over bridge; 14. drive the vehicles by helpers instead of Drivers; 15. illegal competition to overtake the vehicle.

Studies showed that human behavioral factors collectively represent the main cause of three out of five road traffic crashes, and contribute to the cause in most remaining cases. Here importance should be given on human behavior from both vehicle operators and users aspects. Interestingly, in all cases people use to blame anyone of participants in the incident. Drivers could be rated as either ‘ to blame’, ‘ at least partly to blame’, or ‘ not to

blame' in any given accident. But there were also many other reasons of accident like -unforeseen mechanical failure etc.

Bangladesh has lack of policy formulation and lack effective vehicle monitoring authority and enforcement forces. Due to lack of vehicle monitoring and regular vehicle maintenance unsafe vehicles run on the roads. Besides poor enforcements of traffic and highway regulations and lack of strength of enforcement authorities are considerably “ promoting” traffic accidents.

Various research findings have presented strong evidence of an association between traffic conditions and crash probability. For example, vehicle speed has been associated with crashes in numerous studies. The variability in speed and car density increases the likelihood of a crash increases. A higher crash frequency was observed during the peak period and, counter intuitively, with normal weather conditions.

The best option to reduce crashes and their side effects has recently prompted research for proactive approaches in order to avoid crash occurrence in the first place. One of the most promising options gaining wide acceptance in recent years is the concept of detecting crash-prone traffic conditions and warning drivers when the likelihood of a crash is high in order to increase their attentiveness, thereby reducing the number of crashes. The study and evidence suggests that when driver attentiveness increases, crashes decline in spite of poor driving and environmental conditions.

The measures recommended throughout the world are: 1. avoid reckless driving, over speeding and over loading, 2. defective vehicles can not be

derived; 2. provide adequate training to drivers and pedestrians; 3. roads should be properly constructed & maintained; 4. strong implementation of traffic rules & regulations; 5. pedestrians have to use the footpath instead of walking on the road; 6. safe driving without having alcohol, drugs etc. must be ensured; 7. Use foot over bridge or zebra crossing while passing the road;. 8. Utilize helmets, seat belts, etc.; 9. 100% concentration is required while driving the Vehicle etc and 10. Massive awareness campaigns for public awareness of the road safety.

The awareness and training of all participants can reduce road crash to a significant numbers. It is possible through education of pedestrians, particularly children, women, aged on safe practices when near the road. The education of drivers, particularly heavy vehicle drivers, about road rules and safe driving practices is a must for a country like Bangladesh.

The enforcement of laws is very poor in our country. An increased enforcement of Regulations regarding unsafe vehicle condition and others are demand of the day. The increased enforcement of law and regulations regarding reckless or dangerous driving is a must for Bangladesh.

One the other hand, rationalization of inappropriate activities on, adjacent to or near the road is crying need of the time. Roads and highways are use for Bazar, parking, cross road passing and use of highways by slow moving vehicles creates risk of accidents. There must be provision of facility where appropriate for conflicting road uses. Improvements of narrow and deteriorated bridges, culverts and lanes in the highways are a must.

The appropriate provision of road signs and pavement markings throughout the network, and removal of any obstruction to the placement and effective vehicle regulation is very essential for all roads of the country.

The road infrastructures need safety audit and safety conscious planning of new road may be taken immediately. A small changes or improvements in road layout and use of roundabouts and treatments of roadway shoulders can improve road efficiency. The Intersection designs of flaring, channelization, traffic islands etc. may be incorporated and provision for and augmentation of adequate pedestrian facilities. Treatments of roadside hazards like trees, ditches, other fixed objects like electric poles, Gas meter /stations should be well planned to avoid obstruction on the road.

There may be provision of special facilities for non-motorised vehicles and designated truck/bus lanes and installation of delineation devices (lane markings, guide posts, chevrons) to facilitate and guide traffic movements. Control device for over speeding and dangerous undesirable overtaking including traffic calming measures. Compulsory helmet use for motorcyclists and effective enforcement of laws and sanctions against alcohol impaired drivers and compulsory use of seatbelts by motor vehicle operators and car occupants including child should be effectively enforced.

Bangladesh has a moderately written Motor Vehicle Ordinance 1983 providing for non-bailable detention and capital punishment for reckless driving and silent killings on the roads. Such law is not only for punishment of offender drivers but it should be a regulatory law for providing safe road but unfortunately the law is perceived for punishment of drivers.

Currently drivers are tried under Sections 304 (A), 304 (B) and 279, all bailable. While one can be given five years under the first section, the offenders can be awarded the highest three years' jail in the remaining two sections.

The civil society and some organizations campaigning for safe road if fact also demanding amendment of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC) and the Penal Code as well as Motor vehicle Act to penalise the rash drivers of motor vehicles to ensure road safety in the country and to enhance the road crush as offence for capital punishment without considering other major factors of road crush.

The proposed amendment to the section 304 (A) says, “ Whoever causes the death of any person by doing any rash or negligent act not amounting to culpable homicide shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to five years to 10 years with fine or both.” “ Whoever causes the death of any person, by rash or negligent driving of any vehicle or riding on any public way, not amounting to culpable homicide shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to two years to seven years with fine or both,” according to the proposed amended section of 304 (B) of the penal code.

The proposed amendment to the section 338 (A) says, “ Whoever causes grievous injury to any person by driving any vehicle or riding on any public way so rashly or negligently as to endanger human life or the personal safety of others shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to one years to five years with fine or both.” Some time police use to file case against drivers under penal code section 302, <https://assignbuster.com/pragmatic-ways-to-prevent-road-crashes/>

which is non-bailable and can fetch the death penalty. On the other hand, the Truck drivers association demanded that no case be filed against drivers under Section 302. Driver should not face charges of intentional killing for all the accidents those may be also “accidental” killing.

Drivers have taken one of the riskiest professions to serve the society. The question of professional immunity for unintentional killing is a major concern for drivers. They should be the right of defending themselves for unintentional killing or death for the mistake of victim or defective road or transport etc.

The director of Accident Research Institute (ARI) of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET) has the observation that “Can we not term it an intentional offence when a driver hits the road with an unfit vehicle, violates traffic rules, like crossing speed limits, changing lanes abruptly, overtaking other vehicles frequently, resulting in deaths?”

A road traffic crash results from a combination of factors related to the components of the system comprising roads, the environment, vehicles and road users, and the way they interact. Identifying the risk factors that contribute to road traffic crashes is important in identifying interventions that can reduce the risk associated with those factors

A mere increase of punishments of drivers for all kind of accident cannot serve the purpose of safe journey in the road. The global policy is prevention of road crash not the punishment of drivers, one of the road users. Our problem is failure to implementation of the laws. This is an inefficiency of management. Rather, we should have policy of safer people, safer roads,

safer vehicles through improvement of safety measures and proper education to all road users including drivers and implementation of existing laws.