

# Saving lives, one driver at a time



A GROUP representing the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) in Cyprus is offering free advanced driving and motorcycle training, with the aim of reducing the accident rate and improving the safety and standards of motoring on our roads.

The group was established late last year by former UK traffic police officers Gwyn Pritchard and Steve Tucker, who have been appointed officially as RoSPA examiners.

In a recent press release, Pritchard said: “The number of fatalities on the roads is worrying. Working together with riders, as well as drivers, we can make roads safer. All it takes is a determination to make things better. RoSPA training is free, so it presents a wonderful opportunity to riders and drivers.”

Between them, the current group members have several qualifications and decades of experience in training people to drive cars and ride motorbikes to a very high standard. The trainers and examiners are experts in motorbike-escort riding, surveillance driving, VIP driving – including anti-hijack techniques – and all the techniques associated with policing at both normal and high speed.

Tucker told the Mail: “Advanced training focuses on the thought processes of operating a vehicle, using a scanning technique to build anticipation skills. The objective is a systematic drive or ride that is safe, smooth and controlled; one which leaves nothing to chance. We need to get people out of their bad habits, for instance during overtaking – most crashes in Cyprus are head-on.”

“An advanced driver or rider should be a master of time, speed and distance. The faster you go, the quicker your reaction times need to be. For example, an improvement of just one second in reaction time at 50km per hour will give you 14 metres in which to stop or carry out another manoeuvre. The likes of Jensen Button or Michael Schumacher train constantly in order to drive well at high speed.”

“We also aim to help people update their driving skills and abilities in relation to the technological advances in both cars and bikes, including tips on fuel-efficient driving.”

The RoSPA group can also train commercial drivers, and is already in discussions to train traffic police officers

through their collaboration with Mike Moorby of the Cyprus Road Safety Network, who has been training traffic police for some eight years.

The reasons for getting behind the wheel will largely determine the focus of the training. “For instance, with commercial drivers, we will look at improving observation, speed selection and braking techniques, taking into account things like road conditions and weight distribution. A commercial vehicle behaves very differently depending on whether it is laden or unladen”, Tucker said. The RoSPA trainers and examiners offer their services on a voluntary basis, and the only cost is an administration fee for the advanced test, which is €74 for motorbikes and €66 for cars.

In contrast with learning to drive from scratch, where “people tend to choose an instructor they can afford and aim to pass their test as quickly as possible”, there is no time-limit to the RoSPA advanced training. Trainees can take the advanced test – which is graded at gold, silver and bronze levels – if they wish, at a date and time which suits them, depending on their progress and level of confidence.

Since the launch of the local group as part of the RoSPA Advanced Drivers and Riders (RoADAR) network, one British expat – already a qualified driving instructor – passed his RoSPA Advanced Driving Test at gold level and is set to become an advanced driving trainer.

Tucker said that a female driving instructor from the UK who became a RoSPA gold level advanced driver there chose to refresh her skills in Cyprus, and is set to take her Advanced Driving Test next week. Three motorbike riders are also expected to take their advanced tests in the coming weeks.

One of the candidates lives in Larnaca, and as well as expanding geographically, RoADAR’s current members are determined to expand the group to include at least Greek- and Russian-speakers.

The aim is to train as many people as possible at the highest level island-wide, so that they in turn can promote safety and become trainers. Ultimately, “as more people become members of RoADAR, we will look at working with insurance companies, which perhaps could offer reduced motor insurance for qualified advanced drivers and riders”, Tucker said. He added: “We’re not here to change the culture, just to introduce some common sense. Driving standards will have to improve – especially under pressure from the EU – but this has to start with the drivers and riders themselves. You can put up all the road signs you like, but people will just carry on hitting them if they’re not trained professionally to improve their skills.”

For more information on the RoSPA advanced training courses for drivers and riders, see [www.roadar.org](http://www.roadar.org), or call Gwyn on 97732724 or Steve on 97727635. The Cyprus Road Safety Network website is [www.cyprusdriving.net](http://www.cyprusdriving.net)