

Passive Audits

Since the original publication in 2004 of Highways Agency Advice (HA) Note TA 89, the use of passively safe, crash-friendly design principles and products has become more commonplace on the UK Motorway and Trunk Road network. In addition its use is increasingly being seen on Local Authority roads.

Passive Design, which involves the removal of unnecessary items and the use of crash-friendly lighting columns, sign posts, signal posts, restraint systems, attenuators and end-terminals has generally been limited to new works and reinstatements following damage caused by crashes.

In some HA Areas and in Scotland the advice in TA 89 has also been applied in some existing situations where unprotected hazardous road-side objects were identified. Studies were carried out where the number of crashes in which single vehicles left the carriageway was seen to be well above the national average for the type of road. These studies reinforced the need for remedial (crash-friendly) works to improve safety.

As a result of this work, The Passive Revolution (TPR) is now building on its previous work. As well as continuing to disseminate information about roadside safety (in a series of 'Designing Safer Roadsides' seminars being held in England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales in conjunction with ICE, IHT, DRDNI, NRA, Transport Scotland and The Highways Agency), TPR will now support companies such as Sign Sense Consultants Ltd in conducting 'Passive' audits on HA and LA road networks.

Passive audit work consists of an initial video survey of the roadside and a subsequent walk through of areas observed to contain potentially hazardous roadside objects. This work should be carried out by engineers with experience of installation on the highway and of crash-friendly design. Crash records and maintenance for these sections are then examined to identify priorities for removal or replacement so that funding can then be sought by the responsible body.

As part of the survey process, objects deemed to be passively safe are identified with the HA-approved 'Crash-friendly' sticker in accordance with the mandatory requirement of BD94. This helps EuroRAP teams to correctly score the level of roadside protection and will help with inventory and maintenance.

By undertaking a comprehensive passive audit of your road network and programming any necessary replacements you will significantly reduce the legal and financial risks posed by a Road Death Investigation or third party litigation in the event of a death or serious injury involving a collision with an unprotected roadside object.