Driver Training in South Africa

The issue of driver training is provided by various organisation which include vehicle manufacturers. These are promoted from two standpoints:

- Put â€œbumsâ€• in seats in order to expose a particular product to a wider cross section of drivers and therefore potential buyers.

- As part of a greater road safety initiative which could contribute to lessening the carnage on our roads â€“ 18 to 25,000 deaths a year.

Driver training can generally be broken down into two, possibly three categories.

First Category

This is the arena in which drivers are prepared (after having obtained a learners licence) for â€œbattleâ€• on our roads by driving instructors. Their primary function is to teach students how to apply the K53 standards. This, so that they can obtain a â€œlicenceâ€• which will allow them to drive freely on SA roads.

It is readily apparent that the majority of students prepared by these driving instructors have, as their primary goal, the obtaining a legal document - road safety or sound defensive driving habits become the furthest things from their mind.

Second Category

For the purpose of this exercise we are dealing with this second when in reality it should be the third category. Be that as it may, this category is called â€œAdvanced Driver Trainingâ€• and is purported to deal with instructing students in the skills that will make them better skilled drivers. It will also facilitate an introduction to the art of driving cars faster and theoretically safer . Included herein are the obligatory exercises conducted on a skidpan (the challenges of this will be addressed later).

These exercises are commonly called â€œcollision avoidanceâ€• training exercises.

Third Category

This category should in theory be handled as a 2nd tier of training as it consists mostly of in car training that is conducted on road in real world driving. Classed as advanced it, possibly, more correctly falls into the category of defensive driving as it helps a student deal with real world conditions and introduces habits that would benefit a driver â€“ all day, every day. This type of skills training is, in most instances not dramatically exciting, and therefore difficult to promote.

Herein lays the basis for the earlier comment â€“ this should be category two. Since many drivers have progressed to the 2nd category without having acquired good driving habits, they , in many instances, are driving faster (possibly recklessly) with bad habits.

Skidpan

Fundamental to any training program in South Africa is the use of dedicated training areas called skidpans. At Skidpans, participants are â€œtaughtâ€• what happens to a vehicle when outside factors, such as water, are introduced and the vehicle goes into a skid.

While it is one important method of teaching and helping participants identify what happens when control is lost, there are still aspects of training which cannot be corrected as the space in which the vehicle is being operated is extremely limited.

This aspect of training is critical as it involves â€œline of sightâ€• (LOS) and â€œpath of travelâ€• (POT) training in order to op the correction methodology.

Space at a skidpan facility simply does not permit such development of participants skills.

Skidpan limitations

Combine the aforementioned with the fact that there is a limited number of facilities available.

If it is to be construed that skidpan training is an essential component of training then of necessity we are excluding a vast section of the SA population.

Admittedly there are centres such as East London which have race tracks but this only caters for certain aspects of training. Click here for an alternative training type.