

PRESS RELEASE

INITIATIVE TO RAISE AWARENESS OF SLEEP APNOEA AMONG HGV DRIVER POPULATION

November 2014 – Following a collaboration between the OSA Partnership Group and the Freight Transport Association (FTA), a partial Certificate of Professional Competence (CPC) module has been developed which will be available free of charge to both FTA and non-FTA members. It is hoped that the module will make more HGV drivers aware of the symptoms of sleep apnoea and the consequences of not seeking treatment.

Obstructive sleep apnoea syndrome (OSAS) is a treatable condition that is particularly prevalent among haulage drivers. However without treatment, driving with OSAS can make the chance of having a road traffic accident between 3 and 9 times more likely and increase the severity of the accident. It can also greatly reduce quality of life, lead to other health problems, and even impact on life expectancy.

Professor John Stradling from the OSA Partnership Group, has spent his career working with sleep apnoea patients as a respiratory consultant in Oxford. He says, "It is essential that we make drivers aware of the symptoms of sleep apnoea. It is a condition that can be very easily diagnosed and treated, and following this patients are able to lead normal lives. It is especially significant for HGV drivers as successful treatment will enable them to drive as safely as anyone without OSA.

"We hope that the programme that we have developed with the FTA will allow drivers to recognise OSAS in themselves or others and to act upon this knowledge to seek treatment, and in doing so to improve dramatically the quality of their lives."

As well as outlining typical signs of OSAS, the module includes interviews with both clinicians and patients, including Colin Wrighton, an HGV driver who has been campaigning for greater awareness of OSA since he was involved in a fatal accident prior to diagnosis.

Jacqui Hillhouse, Training Product Development Manager at FTA says, "As a leading Driver CPC training provider, it was important that we worked with the OSA Partnership Group to develop a training session that had an impact on drivers, as well as one that provides flexibility. The session lasts approximately an hour and a half and the presentation materials have been designed to fit into any Driver CPC training module. We also decided to make the materials available free of charge, not just to our own members but to the wider population in order to make as many drivers as possible aware of the implications of untreated OSA."

The OSA Partnership Group has been established to bring together organisations from the commercial vehicle sector, clinicians, patient groups and those interested in health and safety at work together to raise awareness of sleep apnoea and to address the road safety issues associated with the condition.

The Group is now working on a campaign to ensure a minimum referral-to-treatment time of four weeks for professional drivers, in order to support employees and employers to find a way of bringing OSA out into the open without fear of losing one's livelihood, and thereby ensuring that patients rapidly get the treatment that they need and avoid unnecessary road accidents.

A copy of the FTA's OSA module can be found [CPC OSA Module](#)

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What is OSA?

OSA is a condition that affects breathing *while you are sleeping*, due to partial or total closure of the airway behind the tongue. This:

- Disrupts your normal breathing pattern
- Causes your body to briefly wake up to restore normal breathing
- May prevent you from enjoying a good night's rest
- Is nearly always accompanied by loud snoring

OSAS is a more severe form of OSA where there is evidence of both a disruption of normal breathing patterns during sleep, *and* symptoms such as excessive sleepiness in the daytime. OSAS occurs in approximately a quarter of those with OSA.

If you suffer from OSAS, the pauses in breathing can happen hundreds of times a night, which most of the time you won't be aware of. This means you're getting less of the restorative kind of sleep required to enable you to work with the levels of energy and concentration needed to drive safely.

About the OSA Partnership Group

The OSA Partnership Group is made up of members with an interest in Obstructive Sleep Apnoea (OSA) representing clinicians, academics, fleet trade bodies, health and safety organisations and patient groups.

The Group's objectives are to raise awareness of OSA and the availability of treatment to manage the symptoms, as well as the implications if the condition goes untreated, particularly in commercial drivers.

While the Group has a non-commercial interest, the secretariat is supported by ResMed. ResMed is a leading developer, manufacturer, and marketer of products for the diagnosis and treatment of sleep-disordered breathing.