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Major ASET Qualification Aims to Save Lives and Money

One of ASET's flagship qualifications, the ASET Certificate in Defensive Driving is having a major impact on raising driving standards. The qualification, which started out as an award over three years ago, has already had a measurable impact in a number of industries and is being taken up by colleges and training providers alike.

The Certificate in Defensive Driving was developed over three years ago as an ASET Award, in cooperation with various subject experts. Its success in its first few years led to its development as a full Level II Qualification earlier this year. It is not difficult to see the rationale for a fully regulated, high quality driver improvement qualification. Over the initial years of running the course as the Award, client companies have experienced reductions in their fleet accident rates, fuel consumption and insurance. There have also been drops in vehicle wear and tear costs and a drop in driver stress levels! Needless to say, the course is proving to be popular with British Industry where cutting transport costs, most notably fuel, is a major issue.

An organisation that carried out the ASET programme at one of its depots in 2004 was Orbis plc. A national property protection company, Orbis operates large numbers of 3.5 tonne vans throughout its network. Following the training, Stephen Jones, Orbis' Head of Human Resources said "...the results were astounding. Accident costs (*at the depot*) dropped from £128,000 in 2003 / 2004 to £20,000 in the twelve months after the training in 2004 / 2005." Orbis' insurers recognised this improvement by cutting their annual premium for the depot by £30,000. Orbis has now embarked on a programme of similar training at all its depots and has an assessor training programme in place to ensure improvements are not allowed to slip. These assessors will carry out basic driving assessments of potential staff before appointment and will ensure they undergo the ASET Certificate course in the first few months of their employment.

Fuel savings are also a big issue, not surprisingly when fuel is around £1 a litre! Driving defensively saves fuel. Savings range between 5% and 15%, averaging just under 10%. In today's climate of ever rising fuel prices this is no small amount, especially when looked at in pounds shillings and pence! Harder to quantify in monetary terms but undeniably a real benefit to the training has been the reduction in driver stress levels. As one of the early attendees on the course commented after his training, "I don't treat the road as a battlefield anymore and I feel a lot less stressed all round."

The programme has also been well received from the points of view of trainer and trainee. "The course involves briefings, workbook activity and practical sessions" explains MD of training provider Specialist Training Tim Barker. "It has proved both interesting and fun to deliver from our point of view and the feedback from trainees has been universally positive." An additional appeal of the programme is that it is

extremely flexible and can be fitted around even the most demanding schedules. This is not something that can be said for previous driver improvement courses. Drivers who successfully complete the programme receive a nationally recognised ASET Qualification as well as the skills to improve their fuel economy and safety records!

One of the early college involvements came from Accrington and Rossendale College in Lancashire. They played a part in the early development work and were also the first college to have staff members trained as assessors on the ASET Defensive Driving Assessor Course. "We think this is an excellent programme and fully intend to keep participating in its provision and future development," comments Alan Anderton, manager of the College's Land Transport Academy. "I would encourage other colleges to get involved with the programme as it directly addresses the needs of business by helping to cut costs and increase safety." There have been other welcome spin offs for the College as well. "From our point of view it has also had the very welcome effect of making local business more aware of the other programmes we offer and how they too can benefit their operation," said Alan.

Chris Daniel, ASET Chief Executive, sees the programme as being of major significance. "It is not surprising that many colleges and independent training providers are taking up the programme. With 28 million drivers on the roads, there is a large number of potential trainees ready to benefit from it!" If you wish to learn more about the ASET Certificate in Defensive Driving then you can contact ASET via their website www.aset.ac.uk.



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