



Surviving on SA's roads



Carl Wepener,
CE, Corporate Services

When looking at statistics on vehicle collisions in South Africa and taking cognisance of what I experience on our roads, then I'm not surprised that other countries have such an appalling view of South Africans' driving capability.



Add to that the fact that more than 50% of road users are not legally licensed and that the remainder have only the slightest knowledge or experience of broad spectrum driving, then it can only spell disaster.

The average South African male, of course, sees himself as driver par excellence and thus thinks he owns the road. As if that is not enough, you also get 'boy racers' who purchase performance vehicles which they then drive without adequate experience. Neither do they have the mental capacity nor know how, or even the slightest idea how, to act or react in any given situation.

BMW's Course

Myself included, there were 30 of us at BMW's Driver Training School, based in Kayalami, waiting to do the Advanced Drivers course.

After coffee we were shown to the lecture room where





a quality theoretical presentation was done, outlining the days agenda and content. As part of the presentation we were familiarised with driving techniques, and the types of influence that accelerating, braking, cornering and other so-called 'simple' manoeuvres have on the vehicle, and what the result may be if done incorrectly and correctly. We also learnt many abbreviations used in vehicle technology. Questions from the floor were expertly handled and it was a relief to see the instructor being able to elaborate on or correct something where information may have been unclear.

For the high performance driving experience we were taken to the track and introduced to our instructors. Once again, comprehensive and detailed instructions (including safety instructions) and information were given before we could begin.

A few laps were done under the guidance of the instructor and only then were we allowed to explore the track – using our newly-gained knowledge – on our own, but always under the instructors watchful eyes. Not only were we cautioned, but also congratulated and then subtly coaxed into going further than we normally would, which really built confidence and gave you experience under controlled conditions. Driving style, correct braking, gearing and acceleration procedures for high speed driving and sudden obstacles were taught and practised.

Don't count on logic

For me the most shocking experience, or lack of adequate knowledge, came when we were to determine the stopping distance of the vehicle at speeds of 60km/h, 80km/h, 120km/h and 160km/h. In all of the demonstrations 95% of the students, myself included, were totally wrong with our estimates and should we have put our money where our mouths were, would have resulted in us all been killed as we underestimated stopping distances by between 50% to 80%.

Does logic count when you are driving at 80km/h and a stationary vehicle is 20-metres in front of you and you have to avoid a collision? No, it does not! What do you do on a wet road in the same situation or when making a turn? What does logic tell you? Sorry! If you do what comes naturally or what you think is so-called logical, you are in serious trouble.

I only then realised how important it is to do what you are taught and not what comes naturally. More important, if you do not practise this in a safe and controlled environ-



ment you will (like most of us at this course) still opt for doing the 'logical', and thus wrong, thing.

BMW's Driver Training Programme is one that offers you the opportunity to expand your driving knowledge and learn to keep your vehicle under superb control in a variety of situations. I must congratulate Abdul Dangor and all his trainers on their knowledge and expert way in which they instructed us and made it a pleasant and enriching experience at the same time.

The training is definitely worth the money. Perhaps you could measure the cost against an insurance claim, but can you measure it against a life? □

**Please contact Abdul Dangor General Manager BMW Driver Training at Tel: +27-11-564 5088 or. He can also be e-mailed at: abdul.dangor@bmw.co.za for a very important and most enjoyable experience. BMW also organises Corporate days for interested parties.*