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Killer Drivers To Face Life Prison Sentences in Government Plans To Toughen Penalties For Most Serious Driving Offences:

To: All Branches

Dear Colleagues,

The government has announced plans to further toughen prison sentences for those drivers convicted of driving offences leading to death.

This decision further turns the spotlight on at-work driver safety and management focus on occupational road risk management in respect of both company fleets and privately-owned vehicles driven on business journeys.

Following a public consultation and overwhelming support from the public, victim's families and road safety campaigners, the Ministry of Justice announced the government's intention to:-

- Introduce life sentences for those who cause death by dangerous driving (up from a current maximum of 14 years), and for careless drivers who kill while under the influence of drink or drugs (up from a current maximum of 14 years).
- Introduce a new offence of causing serious injury through careless driving.

Ministers said that drivers who caused death by speeding, racing, or using a mobile phone could face sentences equivalent to manslaughter, with maximum penalties raised from 14 years to Life. Legislation required for the measures is expected to be brought forward as soon as parliamentary time allows.

The Ministry of Justice said it intended to give further consideration to the maximum penalty for the new offence of causing serious injury through careless driving. The Minister confirmed that the government had taken a long hard look at driving sentences, and said that the Public Consultation received 9,000 submissions. Based on the seriousness of the worst cases, the anguish of the victims' families, and maximum penalties for other serious offences such as manslaughter, they intend to introduce life sentences of imprisonment for those who wreck lives by driving dangerously, drunk or high on drugs.

On the new additional offence of causing serious injury by careless driving, the Minister stated that government will introduce the new offence, punishable by imprisonment, to fill a gap in the law and reflect the seriousness of some of the injuries suffered by victims in this category of case.

The consultation sought views on whether current maximum penalties available to the courts should be increased. A total of 90% of respondents supported the proposals and also thought there should be a new offence of causing serious injury by careless driving. They noted that without a specific offence which reflected the harm caused, offenders could only be convicted of a careless driving offence that had a maximum penalty of a fine.

Last year, 157 people were sentenced for causing death by dangerous driving, with a further 32 convicted of causing death by careless driving whilst under the influence of drink or drugs.

With a huge number of members employed with driving as part of their jobs, the CWU supports the toughening of sentences for such offences. A number of CWU members and their families have been seriously injured and killed in road accidents caused by dangerous or careless drivers and we are aware of the devastating effect on families of the deceased. Secondly we are keen to ensure that members who drive do so carefully and safely at all times, following the laws of the road, the highway code, driving according to weather conditions and sticking to speed limits and ensuring that they never drive if unwell or unfit to do so.

Yours sincerely



Dave Joyce
National Health, Safety & Environment Officer