

## **The Austrian Ophthalmologic Society bans Daytime Running Lights 8 June 2007**

**Following the two year DRL 'experiment' in Austria the Ophthalmological Society of Austria (ÖOG) have banned Daytime Running Lights (DRL).**

Accentuating one group of 'traffic-relevant objects' makes all the other objects less conspicuous - worst case- they might turn into sub-threshold stimuli hence escaping attention - to be 'overlooked' - like other non-accentuated objects in traffic scenarios (side impact- and/or rear end- crashes). Reflecting materials (another attempt to improve safety of the 'weaker group') are inefficacious in connection with DRL.

Distracters (DRL) provoke problems. Seeing, perceiving and recognition have to be differentiated. The driver might see a child crossing the street. Its image may be focussed at retinal level and perfectly functioning visual pathways would send the signal to the visual cortex.

However this very 'traffic-relevant' image of the child virtually may disappear in the presence of DRL.

A number (> four) of distracters such as DRL can cause complex capacity problems of the visual short term memory (VSTM). In the aftermath of an accident, the driver might state: *'I did not see the child! I swear it!'* Wrong! He saw the child, although his brain could not perceive it. The pedestrian crossing appeared to be empty.

The phenomenon described above belongs to a group of cognition and recognition failures: Change blindness, Inattentional blindness, Sustained inattentional blindness, Repetition blindness, disturbance of the 'gist' of a scene' etc. Over millions of years our visual pathways and visual centres together with our complete central nervous system were conditioned to function and react adequately within a natural environment as it is described nostalgic/poetically in the introduction of this article. Ever so often mankind tries to improve nature without giving sufficient thought and consideration to all the complexity of a dynamic system. Clumsily he disturbs and destroys the delicately balanced equilibrium. Usually such simplifications (like DRL) are simple, straight and wrong. Unfortunately increased attention and training cannot prevent those cognitive deficiencies caused by too high numbers of various distracters.

**Dipped headlights** (and fog lamps) are contraindicated during daytime light conditions. The human sensory physiological system requires dipped headlights under the conditions of **reduced sight**.

The reason: All the other 'traffic-relevant' objects, even resting traffic have to be caught and illuminated by the beam of the headlights in order to avoid sub-threshold stimulus conditions. **DRL** does not improve traffic safety. **At no time of the day or the night, at no season, at no geographical latitude or height, even in countries of the extreme north or south DRL can be justified.** The laws of sensory physiology, cognition psychology and brain research are valid at any time and anywhere on this planet.

**RESUMÉ: REDUCED SIGHT: DIPPED HEADLIGHT. DRL NOT JUSTIFIED**

**EPILOGUE:** 'Modern' headlights (without automatic adjustment-system') and street lamps are causing glare and prolonged retinal recovery following light 'stress'. The amount of highly energetic blue light is increasing within the spectrum of these lamps thus causing irritation and problems for the environment (The Plight with Light). It is suggested that design engineers reconsider the philosophy of vehicle lighting. Within short time DRL have contributed to climate change at the cost of future generations.

\**nostalgia* was created by a Swiss doctor (Johannes Hofer): *nostos* (coming home - not homecoming!) und *algos* (pain, mourning) *Dissertatio medica de Nostalgia oder Heimwehe* (homesickness), 1688:

Delicately balanced hues and shades are painting pictures in harmony with a beautiful world. Reflected rays impressionistically are touching your inner eye and make you listen to the symphony of colours. Gentle brushes of light playfully dancing over the skies the clouds the hills make you feel happy and may be - a little bit more than that. Just in case you were lucky enough to look at a spot of peacefully untouched nature - being framed by the borders of your visual field

Turning it around may occur to you that never ending rows of 'daytime running lights' stir up some disharmonious sensations. Or blind anger.

DRL implies a **Violation of the Obligation of Protection**. Article 3, the first cornerstone of the Declaration of Human Rights, proclaims the **right to life**, liberty and **security** of person.

Daytime Running Lights have caused fatalities among 'weaker' traffic participants, predominantly children at pedestrian crossings (quod erat demonstratum).

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