

Along the Right Lines



The 3M™ Linear Delineation System (LDS) has been used as part of a series of measures in a local safety scheme in Dudley Council aimed at reducing the number of accidents that have occurred along the busy A458 Mucklow Hill in Halesowen, West Midlands.

Whenever slow moving vehicles, particularly HGVs, turn onto a busy road there's always a potential danger period as they try to build up to the speed of vehicles already using the carriageway. Factor in a steep hill and a sharp bend, and the dangers are only going to increase.

Mucklow Hill is a steep 40mph dual carriageway that is separated by a reinforced concrete crash barrier and there has been a history of accidents and scrapes with the barrier close to where an industrial estate feeds directly onto an uphill section of the dual carriageway.

Thankfully, there have been very few serious accidents but, as vehicles can get squeezed in the outside lane and then drift towards the barrier as they lose control, the inevitable collision occurs resulting in traffic congestion on a very busy commuter route as well as other problems for commercial property owners in the area as their operations are disrupted.



Local concerns

Routine accident analysis work by Dudley Council had already identified the location as needing some attention, and in June 2009, the council undertook works to reduce skidding on the road, and, crucially, to make the central reservation more visible to drivers, particularly during the night time environment.

The visibility issue has been addressed using approximately 100 3M LDS panels, supplied by William Smith. These are made from 3M™ Diamond Grade™ Reflective Sheeting laminated onto thin gauge aluminium, and are available in a variety of colours. The panels can be screwed or stuck to any surface, such as concrete or metal, to provide fantastic retroreflection across a wide range of entrance and observation angles. In Dudley's case, the panels were stuck with adhesive to the concrete barrier for a quick and easy result.

Warning sign

A new sign, made using 3M™ Diamond Grade™ DG³ reflective sheeting, has also been erected to warn drivers that lorries routinely pull out into the carriageway.

"We felt it important to use a product like DG³ sheeting as it not only meets all our requirements for performance but also helps the Council meet its environmental obligations,"

says Antonio Calleia, engineer in the traffic & road safety department.

"Wherever possible these days, we are increasingly looking towards using reflective signs that enable us to do away with the need for external illumination, and the expense and energy use that this involves."

Early days

It's too soon to assess the impact of all the new measures with any degree of certainty, but Antonio already has his own informal measure of success, ahead of an annual review that will take place next year.

"We've heard nothing more from the commercial property owners on the estate so early indications are that local users are responding well to our accident prevention measures."