CASE STUDY

Aiming for Zero: Off side signs removal

Year: 2012 - 2014

Location: UK-wide

Client: Highways Agency

Summary

Our award-winning research into off side signs challenged and changed a long-standing practice in traffic management. As a direct result of our work temporary signs are no longer used in the central reservation at short term roadworks, improving safety for road workers and delivering significant time and cost savings.

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The Challenge

Installing and removing roadwork signs is one of the highest risk situations our road workers face. We set out to eliminate this risk without increasing risk to road users. Before our research programme began, road workers made 3.7 million carriageway crossings a year on motorways and trunk roads in England. The target we were set was to achieve zero crossings by 2016.

Our Approach

We used a combination of methods, including using our state of the art driving simulator (DigiSim) to provide robust and indisputable evidence that removing advance warning signs would not affect driver behaviour. We validated these results in a programme of on road trials observing how road users responded to different sign combinations at temporary roadworks.

The Results

We provided robust evidence that some signs were not necessary at short term road works. Confident in our findings, Highways England asked their supply chain to amend their working practices immediately and monitored the results from implementing our research.

This showed omitting the signs had no effect, allowing us to continue our research programme, which gradually stopped the installation of all central reservation signs at temporary roadworks.

This staged approach in a live setting gave Highways England and their service providers' confidence, ultimately speeding up implementation and enabling the target of zero carriageway crossings to be achieved two years ahead of schedule.

We received a Highways England Supplier Recognition Award in 2012, the 2015 Judges Special Merit Award at the Highways Magazine Excellence Awards, a 2015 Prince Michael of Kent International Road Safety Award and the 2016 CIHT Tarmac Health and Safety Award for our work on this project.

DATA

- Eliminating carriageway crossings by has reduced the fatal injury rate for traffic management operatives by 25%.
- This innovative and game changing research has won four awards for its contribution to road worker safety.
- The project targets were met two years ahead of schedule.

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