

Fact Sheet 16

Scooter and Powered Wheelchair Road Safety Tips

Powered Wheelchairs and scooters make a real difference to thousands of disabled people in the UK. With an increase of users comes the heightened issue of safety. Top speeds on scooters can range from 4mph through to 8mph and can be suitable for both pavement and road use alike. Some vehicles can weigh up to 100kg each, and at full speed someone could be seriously hurt if involved in a collision. In 2004 there were 1,134 ‘adverse incidents’ involving such vehicles, according to Government figures. Bearing these facts in mind and by following the common sense guidelines listed below users can be safe and accepted on roads and pavements.

When using pavements:

- Make sure you are able to use your vehicle safely
- Make sure you can see well enough to be safe
- Make sure you can adequately control your vehicle and do all the possible manoeuvres, such as reversing, climbing and descending kerbs and turning safely at a significantly reduced speed
- Make sure you are confident to cross over busy roads. This is not as easy on a scooter or wheelchair as on foot. If you are not confident, use a designated crossing
- Remember that the speed limit on a footpath is 4mph!
- Never overload your vehicle, as it may become unstable and it will affect the distance you can travel
- Never nudge into or ram a pedestrian who may be obstructing your path
- If you are turning or changing direction, clearly indicate your intention to those around you and reduce your speed
- Most importantly, never forget that pedestrians have the right of way

When using a powered scooter on the roads:

- Firstly, check with your dealer that your powered scooter is suitable for road use and that it is fitted with all necessary requirements (lights, etc.)
- Make sure you can be seen at all times; consider wearing reflective or high visibility clothing
- Obey all highway regulations
- Never drive against the flow of traffic
- Give way to pedestrians on crossings
- Signal your intention if you are intending to pull out
- In the event of a difficult or dangerous situation, use your hazard lights, remembering to switch them off again when they are not needed

Finally, always remember that if you are considerate to fellow pedestrians and road users, they will be considerate and understanding to you in return.

For a more comprehensive guide to Scooter and Wheelchair safety and to receive the Get Wise Highway Code for Scooter and Wheelchair Users, contact the British Healthcare Trades Association on 01732 458 868 or e-mail: bhta@bhta.com. Alternatively, for more information see the web site at www.bhta.com.