

Drivers Against Daytime Running Lights – UK

Jurgen E. Schrempp Chairman of the Board of Management
DaimlerChrysler AG
70546 Stuttgart
Germany

12 October 2003

Dear Mr. Schrempp,

Daytime Running Lights (DRL)

It is disappointing to observe that Daimler Chrysler UK are using adverts depicting the illegal use of fog lights in clear conditions to promote your vehicles (Jeep Advert Sunday Times Wednesday 24th September 2003).

Contrary to the efforts of lamp manufacturers and certain car companies (DRL were introduced by the Swedish when they changed from driving on the left to the right and have kept them up as a marketing gimmick), daytime fog and headlights are a danger to others and they cause unnecessary environmental pollution.

Please may I lodge with you a copy of the 95 page research document by Perlot and Prower 2003 (also available from www.lightsout.org) which proves that previous research used to claim DRL have a benefit uses flawed data. I list an extract from the conclusion:

Review of the evidence for motorcycle and motorcar daytime lights

In conclusion, the formal evidence of the monitoring studies of the effect of both motorcycle and motorcar daytime lights fails to establish satisfactorily that daytime lights have had any overall effect to reduce accidents. The methods that the studies have employed are inherently flawed: the odds-ratio method is not specific to the effect of daytime lights, and the fleet study method is incapable of distinguishing between the immediate novelty effect of daytime lights, and their enduring true effect. The prima facie arguments in favour of motorcar daytime lights in turn fail to rescue the studies. On the positive side of the balance, the effect of daytime lights to reduce accidents is likely to be trivial. On the negative side there are important potential adverse side-effects.

The use of DRL by one group will eventually force other drivers to use DRL thus negating any claimed benefit, the consequence is that more vulnerable less conspicuous road users will be at more risk and particularly in the case of buses; passengers alighting and trying to cross the road will be masked by the bus headlights.

There is also growing evidence from the USA that DRL can cause eyesight damage which the transport unions could use against you (please see www.dadrl.org.uk – eyesight damage) and that accidents involving buses are increasing – see overleaf.

On the environmental front, since 1997 General Motors has forced most USA motorists to use daytime running lights. Generating electricity from a vehicle engine is extremely inefficient due to mechanical and engine heat losses. To run two 55 watt headlights and associated lamps takes 970 watts of fuel energy. It is calculated that DRL will cost the USA \$600 million dollars using 406 million US gallons of fuel p.a. creating 33 million tonnes of carbon di-oxide pollution p.a. (source <http://www.howstuffworks.com> search "daytime lights" or question 424).

Across the EU, probably the emissions would be similar to the USA. May I quantify the waste for the UK:

UK Daytime driving only	No. of vehicles	Litres of fuel p.a.	MWh	Costs	Tonnes of CO2 p.a.
Present DRL users	670,000	15.8 million	167,360	£11.8 million	41,840
Total UK vehicle parc	26 million	612,707 million	6,494,694	£495.5 million	1,623,673

The facts are not firm, it is hard to quantify how many boy racers encouraged by Stagecoach Group and Volvo blaze around with headlights AND fog lights on or how many inconsiderate drivers use rear fog lights on motorways, so we are open to fine tuning of the data.

To put the potential waste in perspective this is more than the annual output of Oldbury on Severn nuclear power station - more than 2.4 TIMES all the power generated by green renewable sources last year in the UK!

As you may know the year on year decline in UK road accidents has stopped (please see www.safespeed.org.uk), in particular accidents to pedestrians, cyclists and motorcyclists are increasing. The City of London has reported a particularly sharp increase in accidents to these groups. Nationally, this is due to the government's misguided policy of persecuting rather than educating drivers and improving the road network.

We believe a contributory factor is the increase in DRL usage promoted by irresponsible manufacturers which affects the hazard perception abilities of other drivers.

The EU is concerned about the dangers of DRL to more vulnerable, less conspicuous road users and has commenced a new study but this is not due to report until late 2005.

In response to hundreds of vehement complaints about dazzle and glare in the USA, the NHTSA is being forced to issue a directive requiring a much reduced DRL intensity (see <http://dms.dot.gov/search> at the docket number window, type in "4124").

Having drawn the safety and environmental dangers to your attention, I hope you and your board members will consider carefully the implications of DRL.

I must formally advise that if an accident occurs due to glare and distraction caused by any of your vehicles, DaimlerChrysler AG, DaimlerChrysler UK Ltd. and its directors could be deemed to be held personally liable unless corporate action is taken to stop the use of DRL on your vehicles.

We look forward to seeing your vehicles using headlights only when conditions necessitate thus improving road safety and reducing pollution.

Yours faithfully,

Roy Milnes UK Co-ordinator DADRL Drivers Against Daytime Running Lights
www.dadrl.org.uk
www.lightsout.org

cc

The Chief Commissioner Metropolitan Police

The Law Society

Association of British Insurers, Director Mary Francis, 51 Gresham Street, London, EC2V 7HQ

Council for the Protection of Rural England

Friends of the Earth

Pedestrians Association

Cyclists Touring Club

British Motorcyclists Federation

www.dadrl.org.uk website

Mercedes-Benz (United Kingdom) Limited

8 February 1999

Dear Mr Milnes

Thank you for your letter dated 17th January, to which I must firstly respond by apologising for not having replied sooner.

Upon reading your correspondence I was interested by the information enclosed concerning your campaign against daytime running lights (DRLs). As you are probably aware Mercedes- Benz **do** not currently use DRLs on their European specification vehicles and we can confirm that we have no immediate plans to introduce them.

I would like to thank you once again for contacting Mercedes- Benz and sharing your research with us. I hope the above has clarified the matter in question.

Yours sincerely

Benjamin Sim
Customer Assistance Centre