

# Brake position on autonomous driving technology and 'driverless' vehicles

Briefing provided to Department for Transport, November 2014

## About Brake

[Brake](#) is a road safety charity that exists to stop the needless deaths and serious injuries that happen on roads every day, make streets and communities safer for everyone, and care for families bereaved and injured in road crashes. Brake promotes road safety awareness, safe and sustainable road use, and effective road safety policies. We do this through national [campaigns](#), [community education](#), [services for road safety professionals and employers](#), and by coordinating the UK's flagship road safety event every November, [Road Safety Week](#). Brake is a national, government-funded provider of [support](#) to families and individuals devastated by road death and serious injury, including through a helpline and support packs.

Brake was founded in the UK in 1995, and now has domestic operations in the UK and [New Zealand](#), and works globally to promote action on road safety.

## Brake's position

Brake is positive and excited about the potential of autonomous driving technology to significantly reduce and potentially help to eradicate road deaths and serious injuries in the future: to help us achieve 'vision zero'. We also believe it could play a big part in reducing carbon emissions, by improving access to and standards of public transport and reducing the need for personal car use.

Brake is clear that advances in vehicle technology have already played a big part in reducing road casualties, and that some forms of autonomous vehicle technology already available, such as autonomous emergency braking, are evidenced to lower crash risk. Rolling out such evidenced safety technology more widely is likely to help prevent deaths and injuries, so this is something we support and promote, alongside the development of fully-autonomous vehicles.

Brake is conscious that driver behaviour is the cause of almost all serious road crashes. Therefore removing the scope for driver error and risk-taking, by taking away control from the driver through autonomous vehicles, is therefore likely to have a transformative effect on road safety. Improving road safety not only helps prevent devastating, costly and needless casualties, but also can help improve public health and reduce environmental damage, such as by enabling more people to choose walking and cycling.

We therefore strongly support further research and development and the trials taking place next year, providing these are conducted with the utmost regard to safety and with appropriate safeguards in place. We agree that these trials should adhere to a robust code and look forward to inputting into this. We recognise that safety must be paramount in the successful delivery of the trials, not least to ensure positive public attitudes towards the new technology, which is important to its eventual roll-out, as well as, crucially, ensuring no one is hurt as a direct result.

Brake believes road safety and sustainable travel needs to be at the heart of these trials in their delivery and their aims. Not only is this important to ensure the trials are conducted safely, but also to ensure that the technology developed has maximum impact and is suitably appealing to consumers. It is important for the DfT to do everything it can to ensure that the trials and development of this technology are appropriately focused on achieving safe *and sustainable* travel, and explore how this technology may be used to benefit public as well as private transport. The language the DfT and its partners use is therefore important: we should talk about driverless vehicles and autonomous driving technology, rather than driverless or autonomous cars. Brake is happy to advise further when it is consulted on the code.

## Brake's role

Brake is conscious that there is likely to be some public resistance to the use of entirely driverless vehicles, due to mistrust of the technology, misunderstanding about the causes of crashes, and fears around lack of human control. Brake believes it can play a key role in helping to raise awareness about the potential and positives of autonomous technology, due to our unique position as a national charity that cares for and speaks out on behalf of bereaved and injured road crash victims and runs high-profile and impactful road safety campaigns and educational programmes. We therefore look forward to working with the DfT and hopefully those delivering the trials to get the message out about the huge and positive benefits this technology could bring about.

**Also refer to:** [Brake's response](#) to the Transport Select Committee's inquiry into 'Motoring of the Future'