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## **EDITORIAL**

Wow! What gorgeous weather we are having. It does not seem that long ago that the roads were wet and slippery and we had to contend with the difficult driving conditions associated with that particular weather.

However, heat and sunshine also come with their own problems, including your vehicle overheating, particularly if you are caught in a traffic jam.

To help overcome this problem, inspect all the hoses and ensure that the coolant is kept topped up. Keep extra water on board and if your car does not have air-conditioning, ensure that it is well ventilated.

No matter what the season, driving at a sensible speed, paying attention behind the wheel and having a properly maintained vehicle will make driving safer for everyone.

***Stay safe and enjoy your driving.***

## **ONE IN FOUR BRITISH DRIVERS ADMITS TO LANE-HOGGING**

### **Two-thirds of lane-hoggers don't know they're doing anything wrong...**

Almost a quarter of British motorists admit to hogging the middle lane when driving on motorways, new research has discovered.

A survey by consumer site Confused.com found that some 24 percent of drivers admitted to hogging the middle lane, while 18 percent confessed to tailgating.

Both these offences fall under the category of 'careless driving' and are punishable by three penalty points and a £100 fine.

However, the study found that two-thirds of drivers (66 percent) were unaware that they were committing an offence, while 54 percent say they linger in the middle lane 'accidentally'.

Many drivers, though, are hogging their lane for less innocent reasons. More than one-third (37 percent) of drivers stay in the middle lane because it 'saves changing lanes', while 33 percent think driving in the middle lane 'feels safer'.

Confused.com says the issue 'needs to be addressed', as its survey found that 13 percent of drivers have had a near miss caused by tailgating, while 12 percent have come close to disaster because of lane hogging.

But a Freedom of Information request by the company found that just 2,012 drivers were fined for careless driving in 2016.

Amanda Stretton, motoring editor at Confused.com said: 'Unfortunately, lane offences are difficult crimes to catch in the act, but hopefully allowing learner drivers to practice on motorways from June 4 is a step towards reducing the number of tailgaters and middle lane hoggers on our roads.'

'Tailgating and middle lane hogging are not only punishable with points and a fine, but can increase your car insurance premiums in an already expensive time for motoring.'

**COPY DATE FOR OCTOBER SEGMENT IS**  
**3rd SEPTEMBER 2018**

## **1,200 DRIVERS BANNED IN 12 MONTHS FOR USING PHONES AT THE WHEEL**

Tougher penalties have seen almost 600 new drivers lose their licence for using a phone while driving. Almost 1,200 drivers have been disqualified for using their phones behind the wheel since the introduction of stricter penalties last year.



The law was changed in March 2017 to impose a fine of up to £200 and six penalty points on any motorist caught using a handheld mobile phone while driving. As a result, drivers who have had their licence for less than two years can be banned for a single offence.

Since the introduction of the new rules, the government has disqualified 582 offenders who had held their licence for less than two years. A further 599 drivers who had more than two years' experience were also banned.

However, it seems that the number of drivers being banned pales in comparison to the number of drivers committing the offence, after a new study found that almost a quarter of young drivers make calls from behind the wheel.

A survey of 500 UK motorists by car retailer Imperial Cars revealed that 24 percent of 18-24-year-olds admit to regularly making calls while driving, and that one-fifth of 25-34-year-olds even take selfies behind the wheel.

Frighteningly, just 41 percent of 18-24-year-olds said they would never use a phone while driving, backing up research from September, which estimated that nine million drivers could still be using their phones while on the road.

'Since the introduction of the new mobile phone laws last year, it seems many drivers - especially those that are less experienced - are still willing to take risks behind the wheel and many have lost their licence as a result,' said Neil Smith, Imperial Cars' operations director.

'Breaking the habit of touching your phone whilst in the driver's seat can be challenging, especially with the technological advancements that come as standard on most mobile phones, but the risks you impose on both yourself and others when distracted behind the wheel are really not worth it. Unfortunately, the number of drivers still opting to ignore the law is scarily high.

'It's better to be safe than sorry and not to touch your phone when you're at the wheel - the laws are there to protect you and not to punish you, and for a newly qualified driver, the risk of losing your licence is huge.'

### **DID YOU KNOW?**

The man who invented cats' eyes got the idea when he saw a cat coming towards him in his headlights. If the cat had been going the other way, he would have invented the pencil sharpener.

## HOW TO AVOID BECOMING A VICTIM OF ROAD RAGE

We have all come across road rage at some point in our driving lives. When it happens, it can leave you feeling intimidated and scared. But with a bit of planning you can prevent the situation altogether. Richard Gladman, head of driving and riding standards, provides a few top tips about how to avoid being a victim of road rage, and what to do if it escalates.

If there's conflict between two parties, there's a likely chance you've both played a part. This doesn't mean you should react. Try to take yourself away from the problem – let the other driver go on ahead. Even if you feel wronged, letting the other party go will make no difference to the rest of your day

Is someone being confrontational or aggressive? If so, don't make eye contact and don't react visibly. Try not to think about them so that the incident doesn't affect you afterwards

If the other party is still being aggressive to you and you are in fear of your own safety, call the police

If the other party approaches you in your car, can you drive away safely? If you can, consider doing so. But don't rush off and drive like the getaway driver in a film, or if you think the other driver is going to chase you

Do you have a passengers who can film any behaviour on a mobile phone? This will help in terms of evidence. Remember to include the registration number of the other vehicle involved

Don't open your door, don't open your windows fully and don't start or get provoked into an argument

If you were at fault, admit it and apologise. It may be enough to diffuse the situation quickly. And do not do anything that can be interpreted as retaliation. Even if you weren't at fault, is the argument really worth it?

Hopefully by now the matter is over and you are driving away. Do acknowledge that this incident will have affected your behaviour. If you feel upset or emotional pull over and get some fresh air or walk around if you need to before resuming your journey.

Find some distraction like listening to the radio - move your mind deliberately onto something else – deliberately driving well would be a good example – but don't dwell on the incident.

Richard said: "Road rage does not affect everyone every day. If you're finding it is happening very often, you might want to think about how you engage with other road users.

"Unlike pedestrians walking towards each other; who can easily get a feel of what the other person will do, where they might go or the mood they're in, you have no such opportunities cocooned in your car."

He concluded: "No-one need experience road rage, but it us up to each of us to ensure it stays that way.

"So it is important not to be antagonistic or obstructive, perhaps making a person already having a bad day boil over."

## TEST PASSES

Congratulations to the following who have recently passed their IAM Roadsmart test:-

Robert Lawther (1st)

Janice Bridges

## NEW ASSOCIATES

Welcome to the following new Associates who have recently joined the Group:-

Eleanor Murray

Charlie Humphreys

Michael Walsh

Stuart Brown

## DO FASHION AND DRIVING MIX WELL?

Have you ever thought about how your outfit can impact the way you drive? For most people, they get ready for the day, get into their car and drive to their destination without thinking about what they're wearing. Richard Gladman, head of driving and riding standards, provides some useful tips to making sure you're wearing the right gear when driving.

- ◆ Choose the right shoes. Never go bare foot as you have to put pressure on the pedals which your shoes can do a lot easier, and we do not advise wearing flip flops or open-toed sandals as they can get caught between the pedals. Wearing a sturdy pair of trainers or shoes is the best option when driving; you can always leave your favourite shoes in the boot of your car and change into them once you arrive at your destination.
- ◆ Do you have enough leg room? Your trousers can restrict your movement. For example, skinny jeans are designed to be upright and barely bend. Go for trousers that are loose enough for your legs to move around in.
- ◆ Following on from skinny jeans – before getting into your car, think about the type of clothes you're wearing. If they're tight fitting, then this will limit your movement in your car.
- ◆ Fashion accessories. Smart watches now have the ability to connect to your phone. So even if you've put your phone out of sight and on silent, will your watch vibrate when you receive a message or call? Either change your settings to avoid this or put this away with your phone.

Richard said: "Dressing to impress may be excellent for the meeting you are attending but consider the journey there: it may well be that a change of clothes is required at your destination to make the journey more comfortable. Your smart watch may well fall into the 'like device' definition in relation to mobile phone legislation, so don't allow it to distract."

## HUMOUR IN UNIFORM

There was trouble at Dartmoor prison recently when a bomb destroyed the toilet block.

Local residents have complained that, since then, at least twenty inmates have been seen going over the wall.

## **NEW DRIVING LAWS 2018 – WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW**

Driving laws are being updated all the time as the Government attempts to make UK roads safer. 2017 saw many changes, including those to the law surrounding child car seats and the practical driving test.

There are a whole host of new driving-related laws coming into effect in 2018 – let's take a look at what's changing and how it will affect you.

### **Whiplash claims**

The government has announced plans to bring in new legislation which will hopefully make fraudulent whiplash claims a thing of the past.

The Civil Liability Bill will change the way compensation is awarded for whiplash injuries that are the result of a car accident, capping the amount payable and making it impossible to receive compensation without official medical evidence.

Whiplash is one of the most common claims that insurance companies pay out for, with the number of people claiming up 50 per cent compared to a decade ago.

The amount of fake claims has been a contributing factor to the rising insurance premiums that Britain's motorists have experienced over the past few years but with the introduction of these new laws, the Government hopes to see the average driver save around £35 on their annual premium.

### **Clamp down on motorway misuse**

In spring, new laws come into place that mean anyone caught driving in a closed motorway lane will have to pay a fixed penalty fine.

While doing this has always been illegal, it's only with the rollout of smart motorways across the country that the Government has begun to clamp down, as cameras on the new motorways will help catch those ignoring the rules.

Smart motorways use technology to manage and respond to the flow of traffic, opening the hard shoulder when necessary to keep the traffic flowing freely.

Speed limits are shown above each lane and if a lane is marked with a red 'X', it must not be driven in.

Those caught misusing the motorway in this way will have a £100 fine to pay and will receive three penalty points on their license.

Another change to the law surrounding motorway use is that from 4th June, learner drivers will be able to go on the motorway – so long as they have a qualified instructor with them and are in a car with dual controls.

The aim is to give learners a chance to practice their motorway driving skills before passing their test, so that they aren't as overwhelmed when heading out on one for the first time alone.

### **Tax hike for diesel cars**

It's bad news for diesel drivers as they face an increase in vehicle tax, starting from this month.

The changes were announced in the November 2017 Budget and will affect newly registered cars that do not meet the latest emission standards.

The Vehicle Excise Duty (VED) will increase one band for these cars; if you're not sure what you'll be paying then read our handy guide to car tax bands.

*Continued*

## **MOTs get harder**

From May this year, MOT testing has changed with results being split into three categories – ‘dangerous’, ‘major’ and ‘minor’.

Only cars with ‘minor’ faults have a chance of passing their MOT, while any defects rated ‘major’ or ‘dangerous’ will automatically cause the vehicle to fail.

‘Dangerous’ faults are categorised as having ‘A direct and immediate risk to road safety or has a serious impact on the environment’, while ‘Major’ faults ‘may affect the vehicle’s safety, put other road users at risk or have an impact on the environment’.

‘Minor’ faults have ‘no significant effect on the safety of the vehicle or impact on the environment’ and if your car finishes its MOT with only ‘Minor’ defects, it will pass.

MOT test centres will still advise you about items that have no current risk but could develop into an issue in the future.

From the 20th May, the test has changed to include diesel particulate filter (DPF) checks. There was a loophole where diesel cars didn’t have to have their filters checked but now that the new rule has come into place, any car that’s had the filter taken out or tampered with will fail.

It’s important to stay up to date with any changes to road law so that you don’t unknowingly get caught out. If you’re not sure what the law is, visit GOV.UK for more information.

## **DRIVING A NEW CAR: TIPS FROM IAM ROADSMART**

Buying a new car is an exciting experience, but there are a few things to bear in mind as you drive your pride and joy away from the showroom. These tips give advice on driving a new car, from IAM RoadSmart’s head of driving and riding standards Richard Gladman.

- ◆ Allow the brakes to bed in. Start driving gently and avoid harsh accelerating and heavy braking. It’s good to remember that the tyres will last longer if they’re treated gently for the first few hundred miles
- ◆ Check the coolant levels and oil frequently. The oil consumption may be relatively high for the first 5,000 miles as the engine parts gradually loosen up, but it should then settle down
- ◆ If possible, avoid long runs at constant engine speed for the first 1,000 miles or so. Varying the engine speed helps the parts to start working together over the full speed range
- ◆ Fuel consumption will also gradually improve as the moving parts wear in, so don’t be too disappointed if your first tankful doesn’t take you as far as you hoped. It is quite normal for mpg to increase gradually over several thousand miles

Richard said: “Buying a new car is exciting, but it is also a substantial investment. Treating it with a little restraint to begin with will help all the parts to perform at their best for longer and more reliably. This will also help you get the feel of the car before you fully exploit the performance.”

## **DRINK-DRIVING AND THE LEGAL ALCOHOL LIMIT**

### **We all know not to drink and drive, but what are the UK's drink-driving laws and penalties?**

If you plan on drinking, always ensure you don't have to drive. Leave the car at home and walk, take a bus or train, book a taxi or ride-sharing service or get a lift with a designated driver. Whatever the method of transport, always ensure you have a safe way of getting home without any need to drive.

Even small amounts of alcohol have been proven to seriously affect driving ability and the penalties for driving when over the legal limit are very severe. It's also important to be aware of how long alcohol can stay in your system. Driving while over the limit the morning after is no excuse in the eyes of the law.

#### **Drink-drive limits**

There are three measures for being over the legal drink-drive limit units in England and Wales: 35mg of alcohol per 100ml of breath, 80mg of alcohol per 100ml of blood or 107mg of alcohol per 100ml of urine. In Scotland, the legal limit is even lower, measuring 22mg in 100ml of breath and 50mg in 100ml of blood.

Despite what some people might tell you, there's no way of knowing that you can drink any amount of alcohol and ensure you remain under the legal limit. How much will take you over the legal amount in your system depends on the alcoholic drink and what food you've consumed, as well as physical factors including age, weight, gender along with medical conditions and anything else in your system.

#### **Breathalysers**

Affordable breathalysers aimed at the public can help verify the amount of alcohol in your system before stepping foot in a car, but analysis has revealed their results can be inconsistent. Consumer devices are much cheaper than the professional breathalyser units used by the police, which are much more accurate and could provide different results to home breath-testing kits.

#### **Police breath tests**

The police can stop you and request that you undergo a breath test for a number of reasons, regardless of whether they suspect you to be over the limit. During drink-driving crackdowns, which commonly happen over the Christmas period, forces may set up random checkpoints. If you're involved in a crash or have been seen performing an illegal manoeuvre, you may be asked to undergo a breath test. And of course, if you're driving erratically, the police may immediately suspect you of drink-driving. A roadside breath test involves breathing into a breathalyser, which then delivers an instant reading. If you fail this, you'll be taken to a police station for further tests. There, you'll be asked for two samples using an evidential breath-testing instrument.

The lower of the two readings will determine whether you're over or under the limit. If the machine determines you're over the limit, you will be charged with drink-driving.

*Continued*



## **Drink-driving penalties**

The penalties for drink-driving are severe. Anyone convicted of drink-driving receives a driving ban of at least 12 months, along with a fine of up to £5,000. You could also receive between three and 11 penalty points on your driving licence. A prison sentence of up to six months is also possible. The size of the penalty will depend on the severity of the offence. Being caught more than once in a 10-year period will result in a minimum three-year driving ban.

### **More information**

You can find more information on drink driving in England and Wales at [drinkaware.co.uk](http://drinkaware.co.uk), while [dontriskit.info](http://dontriskit.info) has information about the laws in Scotland.

## **FIVE TIPS TO SHARING WITH OTHER ROAD USERS**

When we're in a rush we sometimes forget about other road users around us. We teach our children to share nicely. We want them to understand the other child's point of view. How then does this apply to driving or riding? Richard Gladman, head of driving and riding standards, has put together a few top tips to remind us of how to share the road with other users.

- ◆ Pre-empt what another road user might do and be ready to react if necessary. For example, if a pedestrian is standing between two busy lanes of traffic you may be thinking: "You shouldn't have crossed there." Or you could be sympathetic of the fact they're stranded and allow them to cross if you can do it safely. Whatever the reason, they're vulnerable and you have the power to help them
- ◆ Try to see the world through the eyes of others and help them, without them even realising it. If we all did this, it might even catch on. Giving a little more space or a bit of extra time will make a difference
- ◆ Give way. A large vehicle, such as an HGV or a bus, will need extra room when turning. Give them the room they need to make them feel safe and comfortable when they manoeuvre their vehicle
- ◆ Allow extra space. Motorcyclists can sometimes be seen filtering through traffic. Why not aid them by moving over slightly to allow them to pass you with ease
- ◆ Know when to overtake. The sun is out which means more cyclists will be on the road. Be patient and overtake when the time is right, if you have to follow for a while then leave a sensible space. Make sure your vision ahead is clear and will remain so for enough time to complete the pass. Taking those extra few seconds to overtake carefully rather than rushing could be the difference between getting to your destination safely and being involved in a collision

Richard says: "Our behaviour towards others often changes when driving. Polite individuals can become territorial monsters fighting for a small space that may take seconds off a journey; this competitive attitude can ramp up stress levels. Remember, until you walk – or in this case drive – a mile in another man's shoes, you won't appreciate that driving is much better if we share nicely. Enjoy the sunshine and appreciate the polite waves and smiles you can now collect on your journey."

## WHAT IS A SMART MOTORWAY?

**Smart motorways feature variable speed limits and average speed checks, plus lanes that can be opened and closed**

First introduced in the UK in 2006, smart motorways are designed to improve traffic flow and reduce congestion without the need for expensive and disruptive road-widening schemes.

It's a catch-all term: smart motorways

actually come in three different varieties, although all are monitored and managed by regional control rooms.

### **Controlled smart motorways**

Controlled smart motorways feature lanes that can be opened and closed using overhead gantry signs, and they also have variable speed limits, which are displayed on the same signs. By altering the speed motorists are permitted to travel at, control-room operatives are better able to keep traffic moving during heavy traffic conditions.

If you see a red 'X' above any lane on an overhead sign, that lane is closed and driving in it is illegal. Lanes can be closed due to broken-down vehicles or crashes, or to allow emergency vehicles to reach incidents more easily.

### **Dynamic hard shoulder smart motorways**

Dynamic hard shoulder smart motorways make use of the variable speed limits and closable lanes described above, but also bring the hard shoulder into play when required.

While traditionally a place solely for emergencies and broken-down vehicles, dynamic hard shoulders can be driven on when opened by control-room staff. This is done when extra capacity is required on the motorway.

Dynamic hard shoulders are closed by default, though, and remain separated from the rest of the motorway by a solid white line. Gantry and verge-mounted signs will make it obvious when you can drive on a dynamic hard shoulder and the speed limit will be displayed above them. If the sign above the hard shoulder is blank or features an 'X', this means it's closed.

Smart motorways making use of dynamic hard shoulders feature 'refuge areas'. These lay-bys must be no more than 1.6 miles apart and a programme to paint their surfaces orange is being rolled out to improve their visibility. If you're driving at 60mph, you should pass one, on average, every 75 seconds.

### **All-lane-running smart motorways**

All-lane-running smart motorways essentially turn the hard shoulder into a permanent extra lane, and also make use of variable speed limits. As with dynamic hard shoulder smart motorways, all-lane-running smart motorways feature closable lanes, as well as refuge areas for motorists experiencing breakdowns or emergencies.



*Continued*

Unlike dynamic hard shoulder smart motorways, however, on all-lane-running smart motorways there's no solid white line between the motorway and hard shoulder, which is open by default, only closing when an incident occurs or emergency access is required.

### **Smart motorway driving tips**

Smart motorways are controlled by electronic signs on gantries and verge-mounted displays. Pay attention to these and follow the instructions they show.

If you or your car experiences difficulties on an all-lane-running smart motorway or a dynamic hard shoulder motorway where the hard shoulder is open to traffic, make your way to the next refuge area or pull off at the next exit if at all possible. Refuge areas are marked by blue signs and all feature SOS telephones. Use this to alert the authorities if you have to pull over into a refuge area.

If you can't make it to a refuge area or the next junction on a smart motorway where the hard shoulder is being used as an extra lane, pull over as far as you can to the side of the road of the nearside (furthest left) lane and put your hazard-warning lights on.

If you find yourself in this situation, Highways England's advice is "exit the vehicle via the left-hand door, if you can and it is safe to do so, and wait behind the barrier if possible".

If you can't make it to the hard shoulder, a refuge area, the next exit or the nearside verge and are forced to stop in a live lane, put your hazard warning lights on and contact the emergency services. The smart motorway control team should spot you, or be alerted to your peril by the build-up of traffic behind you.

One last piece of advice: Highways England says that "if for any reason you cannot, or believe that it would be unsafe to, exit the vehicle, or there is no other place of relative safety to wait, you should remain in the vehicle with your seat-belt on."

### **TECH SUPPORT?**





# Group Night Diary

Meetings are held at the Small Hall, Crofton Halls, York  
Rise, off Crofton Road, Orpington, BR6 8PR  
Doors open 7.15pm for 7.45pm start

11th September 2018

To be advised

11th December 2018

The Christmas Quiz  
(including buffet)

12th March 2019

56th AGM

(with Guest Speaker Mike Quinton,  
CEO, IAM Roadsmart)

If you would like to organise a Group Night or have any suggestions for a Speaker, then please contact a member of the Committee.

Their details can be found on page 24.

## Want to Drive on the Skid Pan?



Following the group's successful "Skid Pan Experience" at the Essex Skid Pan, Kelvedon recently, we will be booking another date later in the year.

There are some names already on the list for the next event, so if you want to go, get your name down early to avoid disappointment.

The visit will start with a briefing on what you will be doing including safety instructions. There are 10 places and there will be 2 instructors who will give a demonstration on the skid pan and then you will be able to drive with the instructor and practise what you will have been shown; to create a skid and to be able to keep control, hopefully !!!

The cost is £55 each and you will be using the skid pan cars which are both front and rear wheel drive.

Please let Chris Ashford have your name by e-mail, telephone, text or post to:-

"Sunbeams"  
41 Broad Oak Lane  
Bexhill-on-Sea  
East Sussex  
TN39 4LG

E-mail to: [chris.ashford@btconnect.com](mailto:chris.ashford@btconnect.com)

Phone: 01424 844524 Mobile: 07768 555125

**Book now to avoid missing out !!**

## **NEW DRIVING LAW SEES £100 FINE FOR DRIVING NEAR CYCLISTS**

New penalties for drivers have been proposed to improve road safety for cyclists, make sure you're aware of the potential law changes to avoid big fines.

Motorists and cyclist often come to blows, with each blaming the other for causing a danger on the road.

But the law is quite clear – you need to give cyclists room when passing them, and under new laws currently being drawn up, you could soon face a £100 fixed penalty and three points on your licence if you drive too close to a cyclist.

### **What are the rules?**

As it stands, the rules are outlined in the Highway Code as follows: Rule 139 of the Highway Code states “give cyclists at least as much room as you would a car when overtaking”.

Rule 188 of the Highway Code states “When passing a cyclist give them plenty of room”. If they look over their shoulder while you are following them it could mean that they may soon attempt to turn right. Give them space and time to do so. The Code also suggests that at speeds of up to 30mph, you should allow a minimum of 1.5 metres space when passing, and at speeds over that you should allow a full car width.

The wash your car creates when passing a cyclist is greater than you might imagine, and if you pass too close, it could unbalance them with horrific consequences.

### **What is the new proposed law?**

The government proposal is to introduce a new offence for “intimidatory driving”, which will include driving in a fashion that causes an unnecessary risk to cyclists. Under the proposals, it will be an offence to drive too close to a cyclist, or to drive into a cycle stop box at traffic lights. A further offence will be not allowing cyclists going straight ahead to have priority when you're turning left into a minor junction.

Policymakers will also look into “car dooring” – where a driver or passenger opens their door without checking and hits a passing cyclist.

The Department for Transport has published a ‘call for evidence’ ahead of its review, during which it will decide whether to join several other countries with the introduction of mandatory ‘safe distances’ at which to pass cyclists.

### **How will it be policed?**

In urban areas, the practice is likely to be monitored by existing traffic cameras, such as those used for speeding offences and traffic light jumping. Police cyclists with helmet-mounted cameras are also being proposed. Fines are likely to be issued and transgressions recorded automatically.

### **What are the potential consequences?**

For a straightforward offence, the proposed penalty is the same as that for a minor speeding offence – three points on your licence and a fixed penalty fine of £100. However, this is not capped, and a more serious transgression, especially one that leads to a road traffic collision, injury or death, would be dealt with via the courts and could land you a much bigger fine, a driving ban or even a prison sentence.

## **WHY HONKING YOUR CAR HORN COULD LAND YOU WITH A £1,000 FINE**

The laws around illegal use of car horns aren't new, but recent studies have shown that the vast majority of motorists are completely unaware of the rules, or of the fact they could be fined up to £1,000 if they use their horn inappropriately. Here's all you need to know about using your horn legally.

### **When am I supposed to use my horn?**

The car horn has one purpose, and one alone. To warn other road users of your presence. Circumstances where you can use it are, for example, if another vehicle, cyclist or pedestrian looks like they're about to come into your path and haven't seen you, or when driving on narrow country roads where you're unable to see around corners or over crests, to warn motorists out of your sight that you are approaching. However, there are a number of times when hooting your horn is illegal, and in the most extreme circumstances you can be fined £1,000, or possibly even be arrested and charged if inappropriate use of your horn leads to an accident.

Here are some examples of when you can't use it.

### **At night**

The law states that you can't use your horn between the hours of 11.30pm and 7.00am. This is considered anti-social behaviour, and the only exception is if you're in danger and trying to attract attention. If you pull up outside someone's house and toot your horn to let them know you're outside within these hours, for example, you're likely to land a £30 fixed penalty.

### **In anger**

By far the biggest misuse of a car horn is when it is used to vent your frustration at other motorists, who have done something to make you feel aggrieved.

Blasting your horn at someone who pulls out in front of you, or who gets in your way, is considered to be aggressive and akin to road rage, and if you're spotted by the police than you won't get off lightly. Deliberately trying to upset another motorist is dangerous, and the police don't think twice about prosecuting. You'll be fined £1,000, with little leniency – even if it was the other driver who committed a traffic infringement.

### **When stationary**

Believe it or not, the law says you can't use your vehicle horn when stationary – the only exception being to warn another moving vehicle of your presence. For example, if it starts rolling backwards from a hill start. 'Stationary' in this context means when parked, but also when sitting in traffic, or pulling up outside someone's house to let them know you're there.

### **As a greeting**

Beeping your horn in a car park or street to say hello to a friend or family member, or while waving goodbye to friends, could get you a £30 fixed penalty – even if you're just being friendly...

### **What about my car alarm?**

Technically, if your car alarm sounds the vehicle's horn and does so at an inappropriate hour, then unless your car has been subject to an attempted theft or break-in, you're committing an infringement. It's a difficult one to police, but the law is the law, and this is the rule...

## **LEVEL CHECKS – HEED THE MAX**

While ensuring correct fluid levels is vital for year-round reliability, a useful reminder to help prevent a ruined summer holiday is to make sure that your car is in good health, prior to venturing on a long journey. Yet, while levels should not be permitted to fall below any 'minimum' marks, it is essential to remember that adding too much can have negative repercussions, too.

### **Engine Oil**

Prolonged, high speed motorway trips place particular strains on engine oil, which can run at temperatures higher than the cooling system, often well over 100 degrees Celsius on a hot day. With most cars lacking an oil temperature gauge, low oil levels can make the exiting lubricant run hotter, potentially reducing its effectiveness to protect the engine from seizure.

Every engine consumes oil, to some extent. A falling oil level may not mean necessarily that an engine is worn-out. While allowing the level to fall below the minimum mark increases the risk of engine damage, so too can filling it to the maximum and beyond (see picture, the level of which is just over the maximum mark). Many diesel engines, for example, are designed to contaminate their oil with fuel during certain running conditions and this causes the oil level to rise naturally. If you fill the engine oil to the maximum mark (or over), you reduce the engine's capacity to tolerate the escalating oil level. An over-filled sump can not only cause the oil to pressurise and be forced-out of the engine but, in bad cases, with certain diesels, the oil can enter the engine's inlet, causing the engine to run uncontrollably at maximum speed, until it either explodes, or seizes.

Check the vehicle's handbook carefully and follow its oil level checking advice, because instructions vary.

### **Coolant**

Any sudden drop in the engine anti-freeze level must be investigated. Yet, the coolant level must be checked with the engine cold and the car standing on a level surface. As water expands, when hot, checking the level even with the engine warm will give you an unreliable reading. Checking a cold level also prevents the risk of burns, caused by steam escaping, as you unscrew the cap.

Over-filling the coolant bottle is not as serious as overfilling the engine oil but excess water, at close to boiling point, can be forced-out of the cooling system, when the engine is running. This can spray over the engine bay, not only causing unsightly staining but also a break-down, should the electrics become soaked.

### **Brake / Clutch Fluid**

Brake fluid levels fall gradually as the brake linings wear but sudden drops should be noted. Overfilling the brake fluid container can cause fluid to leak out, which is not good for your car, because it is a most effective paint stripper. Brake fluid's moisture-absorbing characteristic also can promote corrosion. The hygroscopic nature also means that the fluid should be renewed every other year.



## WORD SEARCH ~ COUNTIES OF IRELAND

Hidden in the grid below are the names of 24 different Counties of Ireland. They may read horizontally, vertically or diagonally, but always in straight lines.

R	G	A	L	W	A	Y	K	R	W	K	N	O	J	N
Y	E	W	H	E	U	C	C	I	A	I	A	G	Q	B
K	D	T	O	H	B	M	I	S	T	L	C	I	R	Z
O	P	T	S	L	U	O	R	Z	E	D	A	L	R	S
O	F	X	I	N	K	J	E	S	R	A	V	S	U	W
T	H	F	S	P	I	C	M	D	F	R	A	G	O	V
I	X	T	A	Q	P	E	I	I	O	E	N	L	A	R
L	E	Q	U	L	Z	E	L	W	R	N	R	L	O	B
R	M	A	Y	O	Y	C	R	H	D	A	E	S	O	K
Y	N	N	E	K	L	I	K	A	C	H	C	G	R	N
C	O	N	N	A	U	G	H	T	R	O	J	O	A	I
F	N	D	R	O	F	X	E	W	M	Y	C	S	I	L
V	I	E	H	W	S	P	X	M	Y	R	R	E	K	B
W	J	V	A	M	U	M	O	N	A	G	H	A	N	U
A	H	L	C	Z	D	N	U	I	N	A	Y	T	A	D

CARLOW	DUBLIN	LIMERICK	ROSCOMMON
CAVAN	GALWAY	LOUTH	SLIGO
CLARE	KERRY	MAYO	TIPPERARY
CONNAUGHT	KILDARE	MONAGHAN	WATERFORD
CORK	KILKENNY	MUNSTER	WEXFORD
DONEGAL	LEINSTER	OFFALY	WICKLOW

## **DON'T LET A PUNCTURE LEAVE YOU TYRED!**

Sometimes the roads we drive on can be unpredictable which can lead to a puncture. This could mean cancelling our plans and waiting in a safe place for the breakdown recovery team, but we could soon be on our way if we were able to change the tyre ourselves. Richard Gladman, IAM RoadSmart's head of driving and riding standards, provides some useful advice on how to change a tyre.

- ◆ If it is possible, pull off the road to a safe area. If you have to stop on a road, place your warning triangle at least 45 metres behind your vehicle, but not on a motorway. Activate your hazard warning lights to warn other traffic. Raising the bonnet or hatchback will help other traffic realise you have an issue. If you have a passenger, get them to act as spotter and warn you of approaching traffic
- ◆ A level hard standing will be best as soft ground will not allow the jack to be used correctly. If the ground is not suitable you may need assistance from a professional
- ◆ Locate the jack and wheel brace, it may help if you do this during your weekly vehicle checks so you know where it is and how to release it. This is also a good time to locate the jacking points and find out how the jack works. Often the kit will have a wheel chock; use this on the other axle of the vehicle to assist keep it still
- ◆ Loosen the wheel nuts slightly before you start jacking the car up, the vehicle will be unstable after you raise it and you will not be able to get as much leverage. Remember one of the nuts is likely to have a lock function and will require the unique key
- ◆ When jacking the vehicle you will need it to be raised high enough to fit the new tyre (this will be higher than required to remove the old). Wear gloves when handling the old tyre, if it has punctured it is likely to have sharp steel protruding from it
- ◆ Tighten the wheel nuts until the wheel sits squarely on the hub and then lower the jack. Further tighten the wheel nuts with the vehicle stable. You will need to get the wheel nuts checked for tightness by a professional (when you repair or replace the punctured tyre). If fitting a space saver spare, remember the restrictions that imposes i.e. no more than 50mph (80kph) and should be used to get you to a place of repair - not as a substitute for the correct tyre
- ◆ Avoid changing your wheels on the hard shoulder of a motorway. If you have a puncture on a motorway, use the emergency phones to contact the motorway control room and they will send assistance to protect the area if required. Or arrange for your breakdown recovery organisation to assist you

Richard said: "Punctures are much rarer these days but the risk associated with conducting a tyre change has increased with the volume of traffic. Safety has to be your main concern but if you cannot get to a safe area to make the change; get the vehicle off the road and call for assistance. A vehicle recovery service will have access to professional equipment which will allow a much speedier repair to be conducted. If you are in any doubt, call for help."

## **SIX TIPS TO MANAGING ROADWORKS**

Now that we are well into Summer, the roadworks are in full swing and repairs are being made. This could affect our daily commute to work, holiday route, or even prolong the school run.

Narrower lanes, slow traffic and fraying tempers all add to the challenge of reaching to our destination in time. But as long as you drive carefully and plan your journey, it needn't be stressful. Here's some advice from IAM RoadSmart's head of driving and riding standards, Richard Gladman, to ensure your motorway journey through roadworks is as safe and stress-free as possible.

- ◆ Ideally, you should check the status of any roads you plan to use beforehand. If there are significant amounts of repair works and you think you might get caught up in traffic consider taking a different route, even if it means covering a few more miles. Google Maps is always a good one to check before you leave the house as it often shows the roadworks and will suggest alternative routes
- ◆ If there's no alternative route, give yourself more time to travel and ensure you have plenty of fuel. Running out of fuel is one of the most common reasons for a breakdown on the motorway, so don't risk running on a low tank
- ◆ Maintain a safe following distance of at least two seconds in the dry and at least four seconds in wet weather, and if other traffic moves into your gap adjust it by slowing very slightly. You won't add more than a couple of seconds to your journey
- ◆ Try and look as far ahead as possible (this is where the following distance can help too). There may be a lane that's restricted and marked off by cones. If it is safe to do so, merge in turn if vehicles are travelling at low speed
- ◆ Keep an eye out for any roadwork signs that give you particular instructions. There may also be a temporary maximum speed limit that you will need to adhere to
- ◆ Average speed cameras are also common where long term roadworks are in force – be prepared to slow down throughout. They are there for your safety and the safety of the workforce.
- ◆ Technology. If you are going to use cruise control, make sure you know how to cancel it safely. A better option will be a speed limiter which will allow you to slow in response to the traffic, but help to prevent any momentary lapse in speed control if the road clears.

Richard said: "If you can see traffic building up then avoid switching lanes too often. Changing lanes on extremely busy roads will increase your chances of being involved in a collision and also slows down traffic flow.

"So long as you stay alert and plan ahead, your journey should be a safe and stress free one."

## **LATE NEWS**

Workers at the Bank of England have gone on strike. A spokesperson said that they were not making enough money.

## DON'T LET YOUR COMMUTE LEAVE YOU FEELING DEFEATED

Now that half term is over, the chaos of the commute to work has resumed for some drivers. However, it doesn't have to be a hectic journey. IAM RoadSmart's head of driving and riding standards, Richard Gladman, has put together five tips which can help you have a smooth, stress-free commute to and from work.

- ◆ Check your route. The majority of people travel to work at the same time so it's always a good idea to plan your journey. Take a look at the route you're taking to see if there are any incidents or roadworks that can cause delay. If there are, can you take another way to work?
- ◆ Keep an eye on the road. Driving on a busy road can be intense. One minute you're driving smoothly and the next you're having to stop and start. It's crucial that you're always on the ball and stay alert throughout your journey
- ◆ Watch out for other road users. This links to keeping your eye on the road. Make sure you regularly check your mirrors for any motorcycles or cyclists that are passing or filtering. Busy roads can also mean your vision is limited so be sure to look out for any pedestrians crossing the road
- ◆ Check your car on a weekly basis. Commuting to work on a daily basis can take its toll on your car. That's why you need to give it the care it needs. Make sure you check your oil and fluid levels as well as lights, tyre pressure and condition every week
- ◆ What's the weather going to be like? Checking the weather beforehand can give you an idea of when to leave. Not only this, it can prepare you for your journey so you don't feel anxious about getting to work on time

Richard says: "Our daily commute can become the time we pay the least attention to our driving - don't let yourself become complacent. Plan it as if it was a new adventure each day and try to keep your concentration levels up. If you can vary the route it may keep you interested and the change of scenery may be enjoyable. If you can stagger your start time you may be able to avoid the worst of the traffic."

## NOW & THEN



## **IS HAY FEVER POLLEN YOU DOWN?**

A runny nose, headache and constant sneezing – these are just a few of the symptoms hay fever sufferers deal with during the summer. These symptoms can affect motorists in a number of ways.

Here's some advice from IAM RoadSmart's head of driving and riding standards, Richard Gladman, about what you can do to better cope with it before taking to the road.

- ◆ Ensure your car is clean and dust free and that you operate the air conditioning or ventilation to your advantage, making use of air recirculation where possible. It's also important that you change your pollen filter regularly
- ◆ For anyone who hasn't been diagnosed with hay fever and is feeling under the weather, avoid driving or riding and arrange to see your GP as soon as possible. What you might think is just a slight cold can become a major distraction – so get it checked before it gets worse
- ◆ While over-the-counter medicines will help with a runny nose and sneezing symptoms, they can also blur vision and make you feel drowsy – check with your GP to decide what the best course of action is
- ◆ Your GP may advise you to take anti-histamines to control the symptoms, but make sure you take the non-drowsy ones. If you're unsure, read the leaflet or speak to your pharmacy for more advice
- ◆ If you need to get somewhere but don't feel well enough to drive or ride then see if someone you know can take you and bring you home again. Whatever you do, don't take yourself - you may just end up sneezing and travelling up to 50ft with your eyes closed and losing control of your vehicle!

Richard said: "If you are stopped by the police after taking a hay fever remedy and driving whilst impaired you could find yourself falling foul of drug driving regulations.

"Be sure to check the medication thoroughly and see if it is suitable. But most importantly, concentrate on your route to recovery so you can get back onto the road sooner rather than later."

## **FIVE TIPS TO KEEPING YOUR LITTLE ONES SAFE**

IAM RoadSmart's head of driving and riding standards, Richard Gladman, has put together five key tips to keeping your child safe in your vehicle. Read Richard's useful information about fitted car restraints and ensuring your child has a safe and comfortable car journey.

**If your child is 12 years old or younger they must be in an appropriate car seat.**

- ◆ The child seat you use may need to be different to the one your friend who has the same aged child has. This is because your car seat needs to be in line with the legal requirements for your child's height and weight. You can find out more information on the Gov.uk website under Child car seats: the law.

*Continued*

- ◆ Car seats often get worn, so be sure to check for any wear and tear. Take a look at the manufacturers tag to check the expiration date.
- ◆ Make sure the seat is suitable for your child as well as it being compatible with your car. ISOFIX is the international standard for attachment and most modern vehicles have compatible mounts. If your car seat is secure, there shouldn't be room for it to move around. If you have any doubt, it's always best to seek professional advice.
- ◆ Always install the restraint on the back seat of your car where possible. If the front is the only option, ensure the front passenger airbag controls are disabled by taking your car to a garage.
- ◆ Small children are more at risk of spinal cord injuries in a front facing seat, so make sure you place them in a rear facing one for as long as necessary.

Richard said: "Toddlers don't like to sit still, so will try and get their arms out. Double check the harness is the correct height and pulled comfortably around your child. If you are in any doubt, seek advice from a professional.

"Check regularly to see that your child is still strapped in correctly and if you are unsure, pull over somewhere safe to check this. Keeping your child occupied can avoid them being tempted to try and wriggle out."

## **DIESEL, NOT BREXIT PUTTING OFF CAR BUYERS**

### **Doubts over diesel are turning people away from the showrooms.**

People just aren't buying cars in the UK right now, and with Brexit around the corner and the doubts about the motor industry that it's brought, that's hardly a surprise.

However, Britain's imminent exit from the union isn't the big thing putting off people from buying cars, even though confidence is at its lowest since a month after the Brexit vote back in July 2016. Instead it's a continuing lack of confidence in diesels that's turning people away from showrooms.

The revelation came after a new survey by Paragon Motor Finance showed that 100 percent of the brokers it surveyed blaming worry over what fuel type to buy being the main reason, as opposed to Brexit which was only mentioned by 64 percent.

'What we need as an industry is clarity. Diesel cars have been demonised but the infrastructure currently doesn't support alternative fuel vehicles (AFVs),' said Julian Rance, Director of Motor Finance at Paragon. 'The diesel used car market is still strong and that says that consumers still want to buy them, possibly because there is not a viable alternative.'

'We are looking at four or five car changes before we get to 2040, but there needs to be proper guidance from the Government on how it will work, what AFV rates will be going forward and a timetable of events because the uncertainty is causing confusion and negative demand.'

The lack of interest in new cars for buyers is expected to continue throughout 2018, with only 34 percent of brokers expecting growth, while 29 percent are even expecting further decline.

## **COURTS REPORT**

- ◆ A couple have criticised a driver who crashed into their living room while on a motorised pub-crawl. The 29-year-old driver was jailed for five years after driving his car at high speed through the living room wall of a house in Rawcliffe, York, while almost three times the legal drink-drive limit. He admitted three counts of causing serious injury by dangerous driving and one of criminal damage. He was also banned from driving for seven-and-a-half years.
- ◆ A learner driver killed his fiancée's sister in a crash the day after she was told she had 18 months to live, a court heard. The 27-year-old has been jailed for three years and four months after the crash, in which he lost control on a bend in Cobham, Surrey, and knocked down a telegraph pole. He initially denied causing death by dangerous driving, but changed his plea to guilty.
- ◆ An 18-year-old motorist who gave overtaking police the middle finger was then arrested for drink-driving, a court heard. He was driving home with friends after a night out in Surrey when he made the gesture; when he was pulled over he was nearly twice the legal limit. He admitted drink-driving, was banned for 18 months and fined £150.
- ◆ A 97-year-old man ran over a child on a pedestrian crossing in Oxford, a court heard. He was found guilty of dangerous driving after running through a red light and hitting the nine-year-old who was crossing with his mother and two siblings. The man failed a roadside eye test. He was fined £1,755 and banned for a year.
- ◆ A drunk biker on drugs killed his 22-year-old cousin when he crashed while overtaking at high speed in south Wales, a court heard. Neither rider was wearing a helmet in the incident, during which the 27-year-old rider had cannabis and speed in his system and was over the drink-drive limit. He was handed three years and four months in jail for causing death by dangerous driving and a four-year, eight-month road ban.
- ◆ A mum was killed as she tried to act as a peacekeeper between her son and another man, a court heard. The 63-year-old was pinned against the wall of her house in Northumberland after her son, aged 28, went to confront another man in his car. The 24-year-old driver reversed quickly over the pavement, hitting the woman. The driver admitted manslaughter and was jailed for seven years.

## **THE CONSEQUENCE OF DRINK!**

- ◆ A man is staggering home late at night when he is stopped by a policeman who asks him where he's going at that time of night. A lecture replies the man. A lecture, says the policeman, who gives a lecture at this time of night? My wife, replies the man.
- ◆ A man tells his friend that his house was burgled last night. Did he get anything? asks his friend. Yes, says the man, a broken jaw, six teeth knocked out and two broken ribs. My wife thought it was me coming home drunk!

## SOUTH EASTERN GROUP OF ADVANCED MOTORISTS

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