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EDITORIAL

Well, It will soon be that time of the year again! Crowds shopping for presents and booking holidays not only abroad but also in this country. Lots of people visit friends and family during the Christmas and New year period making the roads extra busy. The above, together with traditionally poor weather conditions make it undoubtedly a time to be especially vigilant if you are on the road, particularly during the evenings and at night, when there will be a lot of office and other parties going on. There is always someone somewhere who thinks that he or she is immune to alcohol and after attending one of these parties, still thinks that they are fit to drive.

Finally, I would like to thank those of you who have supported me by sending in articles during the year and wish all members and associates plus their families and friends a very merry Christmas and a happy New Year.

Stay safe and enjoy your driving.

DASH CAMS HELP THREE QUARTERS OF MOTORISTS RESOLVE INSURANCE CLAIM DISPUTES

Dashboard-mounted cameras have allowed three quarters of motorists to resolve insurance claims by submitting recorded footage as evidence after an incident.

A survey of 2,500 drivers found that 38 per cent owned a dash cam. Of those users, 35 per cent had been involved in a driving incident when their dash cam was in use.

Of those users, 75 per cent were able to resolve an insurance claim by submitting the footage recorded on their dash cam. Drivers estimated that if they hadn't been able to submit footage to back up a claim, the costs to repair their vehicle would have been nearly £1,400.

Heather Yates, in-car technology expert for Halfords, who commissioned the study, said: "Drivers are increasingly reaching for in-car technology to capture instances of careless driving, whilst also saving on their car insurance.

"Using a dash cam means insurers can adjust the cost of premiums or provide other incentives based on how motorists drive. When used correctly, dashboard cameras can provide a record of an accident, helping insurers to deal with claims quickly and efficiently.

"They've quickly gone from what was a niche gadget to a driving must-have. Our recent poll shows that almost a third of motorists now have one installed in their car. Having one will soon become as standard as wearing a seat belt."

Not only are dash cams proving useful to motorists when resolving insurance claims, but they're also being used to help remove dangerous drivers from the road. Out of those surveyed, 30 per cent admitted to submitting footage of bad driving to the police.

COPY DATE FOR FEBRUARY SEGMENT IS
6th JANUARY 2020

LICENCE PLATES EXPLAINED

If you've ever looked at a car, you will know what a licence plate is. They exist for each individual car on the road to have a unique identity, allowing information on the car to be pulled up for a huge number of reasons.

To the untrained eye, a licence plate may seem like nothing more than a random combination of characters — but there is in fact logic and reasoning to its format.

How is a licence plate formatted?

Made up of seven characters split into two sections (except for NI), the UK licence plate is pretty simple. Two letters start the registration, immediately followed by two numbers with a space separating this sequence from the final three characters.

What do the first two letters mean?

These indicate where in the UK a car is first registered. The very first letter indicates the region — for example, Y represents Yorkshire, L represents London and S represents Scotland. Following that, the second letter indicates which DVLA office within the region the registration is made.

As for the numbers?

Up next, the numbers on a licence plate indicate when a car is first registered — with this identifier changing every six months.

Cars registered between March and August use the last two digits of the year itself. For example, a 17 plate car will have first come onto UK roads in that period in 2017. When it comes to new cars registered between September and February, 50 is added to that value preceding it — meaning a car coming onto the roads in that period for 2017/18 would be designated with a 67 plate.

What about the final three letters?

Well, those are in fact random.

This is to distinguish cars from those registered in the same time period at the same DVLA office and can be any combination of letters from 24 of the alphabet's 26 — with I and Q excluded. Some combinations are also manually prevented from circulation in order to prevent any that may appear as offensive.

THE BREAKFAST

A wife was making a breakfast of fried eggs for her husband.

Suddenly, her husband burst into the kitchen.

"Careful," he said, "CAREFUL! Put in some more butter! Oh my GOD! You're cooking too many at once. TOO MANY! Turn them! TURN THEM NOW! We need more butter. Oh my GOD! WHERE are we going to get MORE BUTTER?"

They're going to STICK! Careful . CAREFUL! I said be CAREFUL! You NEVER listen to me when you're cooking! Never!

Turn them! Hurry up! Are you CRAZY? Have you LOST your mind? Don't forget to salt them. You know you always forget to salt them. Use the salt. USE THE SALT! THE SALT!"

The wife stared at him. "What in the world is wrong with you? You think I don't know how to fry a couple of eggs?"

The husband calmly replied, "I just wanted to show you what it feels like when I'm driving."

DRINK-DRIVE DEATHS AT HIGHEST LEVEL SINCE 2009

The number of people killed in drink-drive crashes on Britain's roads has reached an eight-year high.

Department for Transport (DfT) data shows there were between 230 and 270 fatalities in accidents where at least one driver or rider was over the alcohol limit in 2017.



The central estimate of 250 deaths is the most since 2009.

It represents an increase of 20 compared with 2016, although the DfT described this rise as “not statistically significant”.

The total number of people injured or killed in drink-drive crashes was 8,600 in 2017, down from 9,040 during the previous year.

Publication of the figures comes after recent research by road safety charity Brake found that more than 5,000 motorists have been caught drink-driving on two or more occasions in the past four years.

The Scottish Government reduced the alcohol limit for drivers from 80 milligrams (mg) per 100 millilitres of blood to 50mg in December 2014, but the legal level in the rest of the UK remains among the highest in Europe at 80mg.

Brake's director of campaigns Joshua Harris said the increase in drink-drive deaths is “incredibly concerning”.

He went on: “How much longer must this continue before the Government acts? “The current drink-driving limit gives a false impression that it is safe to drink and drive. This is a dangerous message and one that couldn't be further from the truth.”

AA president Edmund King said there continues to be a “hard-core of drink-drivers” as more than two-fifths of those failing breath tests are more than twice over the limit.

He continued: “As well as needing more cops in cars to catch people in the act, the ultimate responsibility lies with drivers themselves.”

RAC head of policy Nicholas Lyes claimed the figures show that “no discernible progress has been made” in reducing the number of drink-drive fatalities over nine years.

He added: “The Government should be looking closely at all its options, even reviewing the drink-drive limit.”

A DfT spokeswoman said: “Drink-driving is absolutely deplorable, and those who do it not only put their own lives at risk but other people's too.

“We are working with industry to develop new evidential roadside breath tests, meaning drink-drivers do not have the chance to sober up before being tested, while the Think! Mates Matter campaign had the biggest impact in young drivers' attitudes to drink-driving in a decade.”

TEST PASSES

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

Guy Guneri (1st)

Jennifer Hutton

Richard Myers

NEW ASSOCIATES

Welcome to the following new Associate who has recently joined the Group:-

Gareth Hughes

MOST COMMON REASON FOR FAILING THE NEW DRIVING TEST REVEALED

New data has revealed the most common reasons for failing the new driving test.

First introduced in December 2017, the new test incorporated four changes. The independent driving section was increased from 10 to 20 minutes, and following sat-nav directions was also added.



Reversing manoeuvres were changed to exclude 'reverse around a corner' and 'turn-in-the-road', while candidates were also asked to answer two safety questions while out driving.

But it's been revealed that the most common major fault – which means the driver has endangered themselves, the public or property and results in an instant fail – was a failure to observe properly at a junction.

In eight areas, including the Outer Hebrides, Hemel Hempstead and Motherwell, this caused over 40 per cent of learners to fail their driving test.

This was followed by a failure to check mirrors when changing direction and improperly turning right at a junction.

Tom Preston, managing director of Hippo Leasing who compiled the data following a Freedom of Information request: "At the end of 2017, the DVSA introduced changes to the practical driving test to increase driver safety and the quality of training in light of the troubling statistic that road collisions remain the biggest killer of young people in the UK.

"Driving test faults reflect the factors which cause the most accidents on the road. Observation is the most common factor, according to the DfT, so while over 167,000 learners failed their practical test last year for this very reason, it's important candidates learn from their mistakes to keep themselves and others safe once they're qualified to drive."

OF GRAVE CONCERN?

I went to the cemetery yesterday to lay some flowers on a grave. As I was standing there I noticed 4 grave diggers walking about with a coffin, 3 hours later and they're still walking about with it. I thought to myself, they've lost the plot!

NEW 20MPH SPEED LIMIT FOR CENTRAL LONDON ROADS GIVEN GO-AHEAD

Transport for London (TfL) will introduce a 20mph speed limit on all roads in central London from next year, following a successful public consultation.

The move would see the limit applied to 5.5 miles of roads by May 2020.

The public consultation received close to 2,000 responses during its running period of five weeks up until July 10. Half of respondents believe that a 20mph speed limit would have a positive impact on walking, with 31 per cent saying that more people would choose to walk rather than drive. In addition, almost two-thirds believed the proposals would lead to more people cycling.

It forms part of the Mayor of London's Vision Zero scheme which is pushing to eliminate all road deaths in the capital by 2041.

In addition, the height of pedestrian crossings will be increased in several high-risk areas.

- ◆ Albert Embankment
- ◆ Lambeth Palace Road, Lambeth Bridge
- ◆ Millbank
- ◆ Victoria Embankment
- ◆ Upper Thames Street, Lower Thames Street, Tower Hill
- ◆ Borough High Street, Great Dover Street
- ◆ Blackfriars Road
- ◆ Part of Druid Street (between Tower Bridge Road and Crucifix Lane)
- ◆ Crucifix Lane, part of Bermondsey Street (between Crucifix Lane and Tooley Street)
- ◆ Aldgate Gyratory, including Leman Street, Prescott Street, Mansell Street, Minories and Goodman's Yard

The mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, said: "Every single death on London's streets is one too many so I'm really pleased that Londoners have backed our plans to introduce a 20mph speed limit on TfL roads within the Congestion Charge Zone and at Aldgate Gyratory.

"By also bringing forward plans to lower speed limits in other parts of London, we will help protect more people walking and cycling across our city."

Florence Eshalomi, chair of the London Assembly Transport Committee, said today: "With the recent rise in road deaths, this is a good start from the Mayor and TfL, but much more needs to be done to protect pedestrians and cyclists.

"Our roads will be made safer by reducing speed limits.

"TfL took on board the Transport Committee's advice in the 'Hostile Streets' report to review all the speed limits on its roads.

"However, we suggest the mayor considers going further to areas outside of the Congestion Charge Zone where walking and cycling should be safer.

"Every life lost on the road is a tragedy. Particularly when the cause is a driver not obeying the speed limit."



HALF OF UK DRIVERS AVOIDING HARD SHOULDERS ON SMART MOTORWAYS

More than half of UK motorists have admitted to avoiding the hard shoulder of smart motorways when it is open to traffic, a new survey has revealed.

A study of more than 2,000 UK drivers revealed that 56 per cent admitted to avoiding the hard shoulder on smart motorways at some point, even if overhead gantries said that it was open for use.

Almost a third of those who said they avoid an open hard shoulder said they did so because they weren't sure when to use it, while a quarter said that they were concerned that a stationary vehicle could be ahead.

Some 14 per cent also said that they wanted to drive in other lanes so that they had an 'escape lane' to drive into should they need to move across quickly.

Roger Griggs, communications director of Kwik Fit, the company behind the findings, said: "These findings reflect the concerns and uncertainty that many drivers have when driving on smart motorways.

"It's clear that if many drivers are avoiding using the hard shoulder when it's open, then the extra capacity which smart motorways are designed to provide is not being utilised properly and we will end up being in a worse position than with the original road layout.

"It is vital that there is a nationwide information campaign to ensure that drivers fully understand when they can and cannot use the hard shoulder if smart motorways are to be accepted by drivers and provide a way to ease congestion – something we need desperately."

The survey also highlighted a general uncertainty of how to use smart motorways. One in five said they didn't know when the hard shoulder was in use, while 13 per cent said, incorrectly, that you should never use the hard shoulder of a smart motorway.

In addition, just four in 10 knew it was only possible to drive on the hard shoulder of a motorway when signalled by overhead signs.

78 POINTS ON HIS LICENCE AND HE'S STILL DRIVING

Britain's worst driver still on the roads is a 33-year-old man who has racked up 78 penalty points. The unnamed motorist, from Bradford, tops the list of more than 10,000 drivers who are still behind the wheel despite repeated endorsements. The second worst driver who is a 48-year-old man from Faversham, Kent, who has 66 points. The country's worst female driver is a 33-year-old from Burnley, who has clocked up 49 points. Drivers are usually banned if they receive 12 points on their licence. However 10,858 motorists have that tally or more but are still allowed to drive. The oldest repeat offender is an 81-year-old, who is still permitted to drive despite having 25 points on her licence. The youngest is a boy, 17, who has racked up 19 points in less than a year. Motorists can dodge bans by convincing magistrates they will face 'exceptional hardship' if they lose their licence. This means drivers can rack up huge number of points and stay on the road.



IS YOUR VEHICLE READY FOR THE ROAD?

Richard Gladman, IAM RoadSmart's head of riding and driving standards, explains the POWDERY checks you should do on your car or bike before setting out on your journey.

If you have friends or family who drive or ride, please share these tips with them to help them stay safe on the road.

P - Petrol

For both drivers and riders, always make sure you fuel up before a long journey. You'll need enough to get to your destination or the nearest petrol station.

O - Oil

Car drivers - When did you last do an oil check? Most new cars have the technology to let you know when your oil needs topping up. But for those with an older vehicle, make sure you're checking the level regularly. Your handbook will give you the preferred method for your car.

For bike riders, you can check you have the right amount of oil by using a dipstick or sight glass in the side of the engine casing. Remember to keep the bike vertical when checking this by getting someone to sit on the bike whilst you check the oil. Bear in mind that overfilling will also cause damage, so top up slowly and check your fuel level regularly.

W - Water

Have you checked your vehicle fluid levels? For drivers, your car will alert you if you're running low on coolant, but ideally, you shouldn't let it get this low. Check water levels and buy coolant for your car and top it up whenever necessary. For riders, levels need to be checked if you have a water-cooled engine, ensuring the bike is vertical when you make the check. If you find that you're low on water, remember never to use tap water - you'll need a mix of water and antifreeze.

D - Damage

For both drivers and riders, take a look around your vehicle, checking your tyres and bodywork to ensure there is no visible damage. For riders, also remember to check your protective clothing and crash helmet to ensure they are intact. Remember it's recommended that you replace your crash helmet every 3-5 years or if you've had a crash or dropped it. For car drivers, once you're in your vehicle, make sure you have no warning lights pop up on the dashboard before you set off.

E - Electrics

Whichever vehicle you're driving or riding, check all the lights, preferably with a helper to operate the switches or walk around whilst you do. Failing that, use the reflection of the lights in a window or a nearby car. For bike riders, remember to ensure your brake lights work from both controls. In addition to your lights, also check your horn and windscreen washers, remembering to be considerate of others when you do - waking up the neighbours or leaving puddles on the garage floor may not be popular.

continued

R - Rubber

When did you last check your tyres? Both riders and drivers should take a look at tyre tread depth and overall condition before every journey to ensure they are road legal. Remember to check tyre pressure as well. Bear in mind this could change depending on the amount of weight your bike or car is carrying. The legal limit on a bike is 1mm across three-quarters of tyre and visible tread on the rest. The legal limit on a car is minimum 1.6mm in a continuous band around the central three-quarters of the tyre. Tyre pressures for both bikes and cars should be tested when the tyres are cold, as the reading will be higher when they're hot.

Y - You

Are you fit to drive or ride? Have you been under the weather? Ask yourself if you're fit to be in control of your vehicle. Medication and tiredness will affect your driving or riding, and your concentration may not be 100% if you're ill or stressed. Check that you're fit to drive and take a break before you set off if necessary. For bike riders, if you've been out of practice for a few months, then you may have lost your 'bike fitness'. Make sure you are fit to ride your bike and remember to take it slow and steady until you've got to grips with it again.

Richard says: "Whether it's a car or bike, ensuring your vehicle is in tip-top condition will help you enjoy your journey. Keep your service schedule up to date and don't put off any replacements. Tyres should be kept in good condition, as performance will start to drop off before the legal limits of wear are reached. Don't forget - the maintenance of your vehicle, so you have one less thing to worry about before you start a journey, is an important part of the 'you' in driving and riding."

KEEPING YOUR CAR ABOVE WATER: TIPS FROM IAM ROADSMART

IAM RoadSmart's head of driving and riding standards, Richard Gladman, has put together some crucial advice to help you drive safely in the rain.

Heavy rain:

- ◆ Heavy rain will affect your visibility, so take it slow. Rule 126 of the Highway Code states that the braking distance between yourself and the vehicle in front of you should be two seconds when driving on a dry road, and at least four seconds in the wet. It is even longer on icy surfaces. IAM RoadSmart recommends up to 10 times the braking distance when driving on ice.
- ◆ Your windscreen should be clean, wipers effective and the jets positioned correctly and aimed at the screen. It is sensible to clean the windscreen, make any necessary adjustments and remove anything from the main area before you start your journey.
- ◆ A good rule of thumb is that if you need windscreen wipers, then you need your headlights. Automatic light settings will not always activate in bad weather conditions, so it is up to you to make a sensible decision as to whether these need to be turned on.

Aquaplaning:

If the water is standing in puddles on the road surface, your car is at risk of aquaplaning.

continued

- ◆ Aquaplaning is where a wedge of water forms in front of the tyre and lifts it up off the road surface. This is caused by the tread not being able to displace the amount of water present. To recover from aquaplaning, ease gently off your accelerator, have a firm grip of the steering wheel and be sure not to make any sudden steering actions. The car will eventually regain its grip as the water clears.

Floods:

- ◆ First, ask yourself - can you take another route? If not, then you need to identify how deep the flood is. If the standing water is more than six inches deep, avoid driving through it. If you are familiar with the road, you can judge the flood in relation to the kerb.
- ◆ If heavy rain was not the cause of the flood, then what was? And what impact on the road does it have? For example, if it is a burst water main, the standing water may look like a normal flood but the road surface beneath the water may be completely broken up. If you are unsure how the flood has formed, then avoid it altogether.
- ◆ Are there other vehicles similar to yours that are safely driving through? From this, make a judgement call as to whether it is safe to travel through or not.
- ◆ If the water is fast flowing, do not attempt to drive through it, as there is a real danger of your car being swept off the road.

If you have taken everything into consideration and decide to drive through the flood, be sure to do so slowly. The best approach is to press lightly on your clutch and add gentle pressure on your accelerator to increase your engine revs. Do so without increasing your speed, in a similar way to how you would undertake a hill start.

- ◆ This will prevent water from entering your exhaust. If you are in an automatic car, accelerate slightly but control the speed with your brakes. When you have passed the flood, test your brakes to make sure they are dry and working properly.
- ◆ If you are in the slightest doubt, then turn around and don't go through the flood. Often modern saloon cars have the air intake in the wheel arch, which may be below the water level. If your engine should take in water, it will immediately hydro lock and the engine will stop.
- ◆ Remember to stay alert and avoid splashing pedestrians. If this is done accidentally- even when causing splashed when driving through puddles at the side of the road - you could receive a fixed penalty and three points on your license for driving without due care and attention or without reasonable consideration for other road users. If deliberately done, it could be a public order offence, a court appearance and a fine.

Richard Gladman, head of driving and riding standards, said: "With the British weather the way it is, we should all be well practised at driving in the rain. Keeping your car maintained and the rubber (wipers and tyres) in good condition will help you stay safe. In the recent extremes, we have seen that standing water and floods are becoming more commonplace, so take extra care and if possible, avoid driving through standing water. If you're in any doubt about the depth or surface underneath a flood, then it's best not to take any chances."

'IDLE THREAT' TO MOTORISTS WHO LEAVE THEIR ENGINES RUNNING

- ◆ Idling engines can produce twice as many emissions as an engine on the move.
- ◆ They contribute to the 40,000 air pollution-related deaths in the UK each year.
- ◆ Switching off your engine will help improve air quality and keep you legal.



Road Safety and breakdown organisation GEM Motoring Assist is urging all drivers not to leave their engines idling. Not only is the practice illegal, but it also has an impact on health and the environment, and is an unnecessary use of fuel, says GEM. Idling is the term given to leaving your car's engine running while your vehicle is stationary and you are not planning on moving off.

According to GEM road safety officer Neil Worth, idling your engine is not only against the law, but it also makes a significant contribution to the 40,000 air pollution-related deaths in the UK each year.

"Idling means your car, van or truck pumps loads more carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide and other potentially harmful exhaust gases into the air.

"That's why it's an offence under section 42 of the Road Traffic Act 1988, as made clear by Rule 123 of the Highway Code. Leaving a vehicle engine running unnecessarily while stationary on a public road can land you with a £20 penalty charge notice.

"So we ask drivers to think twice before sitting stationary in their vehicle with the engine running. By switching off you will be helping to improve air quality, reducing your carbon footprint and complying with the law."

THE TALKING CENTIPEDE

A single guy decided life would be more fun if he had a pet, so he went to the pet store and told the owner that he wanted to buy an unusual pet. After some discussion, he finally bought a talking centipede, which came in a little white box to use as his house.

He took the box back home, found a good spot for the box and decided he would start off by taking his new pet to church with him, so he asked the centipede in the box, "Would you like to go to church with me today?

We will have a good time." But there was no answer from his new pet.

This bothered him a bit, but he waited a few minutes and then asked again, "How about going to church with me and receive blessings?" But again, there was no answer from his new friend and pet, so he waited a few minutes more, thinking about the situation.

The guy decided to invite the centipede one last time. This time he put his face up against the centipede's house and shouted, "Hey, in there! Would you like to go to church with me and learn about God?" ... This time, a little voice came out of the box, "I heard you the first time. I'm putting my shoes on!"



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

10th December 2019
The Christmas Quiz
(including buffet)

10th March 2020
57th AGM
(with Guest Speaker Sarah Fisk, IAM RoadSmart
DDR Training and Driver Education Manager)

9th June 2020
(with Guest Speaker to be advised)

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 in the new 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 £63 each and you will be using the skid pan cars which are both front and rear wheel drive.

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

39 Great Queen St.
Dartford
Kent
DA1 1TJ

E-mail to: michaelahalse121@gmail.com

Phone: 020 7802 3240 Mobile: 07860 409493

Book now to avoid missing out !!

DEFROSTING CAR WINDOWS; TIPS

We've all been there... In a rush, get to the car only to realise that the windscreen is iced up with no means to defrost it quickly. Most cars don't have a heated front windscreen and certain car engines take an age to warm up and using a scraper can take an age to clear all the ice. So if you haven't a bottle of de-icer at hand, what's the quickest way to defrost a car windscreen? In the UK where temperatures usually don't plummet to Arctic levels, pouring a jug of lukewarm water onto your windscreen does the trick – but avoid making the water too hot. Pouring boiling water onto a frozen window stands the risk of cracking your windscreen, so test the water first to ensure it's lukewarm only.

First start your engine and have the blowers concentrated on the windscreen. Have a cloth or some form of scraper ready. A credit card will do.

Now evenly pour the jug of warm water from the top of the windscreen from one side to the other. You should then be left with either a clear windscreen or a little slush. Wipe or scrape away the slush.

You might be left with some stubborn deposits of ice on the windscreen, so avoid turning on your wipers right away as you may risk damaging the rubber on the blades.

In the coldest months, the water has a tendency to refreeze quickly, so ideally, purchase a cheap squeegee and scraper which you can wipe away the water immediately after pouring. This also saves you from damaging your wipers.

If you intend on pouring warm water on other windows, be careful to avoid getting water into the door seals. Once the water hits the cold metal, it'll freeze making it difficult to open the door and whilst doing so may also risk damaging the rubber door seals.

Benefits of Using Warm Water

It's becoming increasingly easier to purchase cheap goods online. Windscreen de-icer in particular is not only highly toxic to humans and the environment, but if you're not entirely confident of the contents of your bottle, certain products may contain chemicals that can damage vehicle paintwork such as Ethylene glycol. A little warm water is also far cheaper.

Preventing Icy Windscreen

Using a windscreen frost shield can save time and effort

Preventing an icy windscreen is of course the ideal situation. Magnetic windscreen covers are easily attached and removed and are cheap to purchase. This one-time purchase also means you'll be spending less on de-icer.

Misted Windows

When a rush, it can be tempting to wipe the condensation from the inside of a misted windscreen using our hands. This often results in smears leaving the window blurry.

The most effective and quick method is to use a microfibre cloth. Microfibre cloths soak up large quantities of liquid and do not leave smears on windows. Keeping a couple of these cloths in your glove compartment will prove beneficial, plus packs are cheap to purchase.

continued

Icy Windows and the Law

For your own safety and that of others, it's important to remove snow and ice from all windows and lights. You're likely to be stopped by police if you're driving with your view of the road impaired by ice or snow and if your lights, indicators and number plates are not kept clear. The penalty of 'driving without due care and attention' or 'using a motor vehicle in a dangerous condition' can see a driver face penalty points and a fine. Remember also that your door mirrors may require de-icing.

Along with the risk of prosecution, if a traffic accident occurs, an insurer may not pay-out, or reduce a pay-out if it is deemed that the driver was negligent in preparing the vehicle for safe use on public roads.

Even leaving the snow on your car roof may result in potential issues. Braking can see snow falling forward over the windscreen obscuring your view and accelerating may see snow clumps falling off into the path of other motorists, particularly affecting vulnerable road users such as cyclists and motorcyclists.

Leaving Car Running to Defrost

Leaving an unattended car running is illegal and may see the owner hit with a £20 fine (doubling if not paid within a certain time). Not only is this illegal, car thieves keep a keen eye out for unattended vehicles left running. Unsurprisingly, car insurers take a dim view of this as it's practically handing thieves the car along with the keys, often resulting in lower pay-outs on claims.

Due to the environmental impact of vehicle use, leaving the car engine running on a public road even if it's occupied may result in a fine if it's deemed unnecessary.

SMOKING IN YOUR CAR COULD KNOCK £2,000 OFF ITS VALUE

People who smoke in their cars could be knocking up to £2,000 off the sell-on value, according to vehicle valuation experts.

HPI says that many smokers are unaware of the smell and physical damage to the interior that smoking can cause, putting off future owners.

It also suggests that giving the car a deep clean can cost up to £150, but doesn't guarantee the smell will be gone. In some cases, the smoke can work its way deep into the fabric, requiring a complete retrim to fix.

Furthermore, repairing marks, stains and cigarette burns that may have appeared can knock profits further down.

Fernando Garcia, consumer director at HPI, said: "Smoking in cars is bad news as far as re-sale health is concerned. The first thing a car dealer will do when looking at a car being sold by a smoker is knock down the price of the part exchange.

"A car for part-ex has to be made fit for re-sale and this becomes considerably more difficult and expensive when that car was previously driven by a smoker.

"There is often no obvious visual damage, but the smell of smoke is a major problem for motor dealers. Smoke becomes ingrained in the fabric of the car and climate control system, requiring a professional valet and a specialist tools to clean the air conditioning."

MOTORWAY SIGNS COULD SOON GO MULTI-LINGUAL TO HELP FOREIGN TRUCKERS

Signposts will 'speak' nine foreign languages.

The electronic message signs on English motorways could soon turn multi-lingual in a bid to help foreign lorry drivers.



If a new pilot scheme in Cumbria is successful, we could soon see signs flicking between up to nine different foreign languages, depending on the registration of the vehicle approaching. Using camera technology, the system can identify the nationality of the oncoming vehicle, then change the sign to the appropriate language.

For example, a sign that read "M6 J4 closed" would change to "M6 J4 cerrado" if it detected a Spanish-registered vehicle approaching. The sign could also switch to one of German, French, Polish, Romanian, Dutch, Lithuanian, Slovak or Hungarian, depending on the nationality of the vehicle.

At present, the multi-lingual signs are only operational along the A66 and A69 to service a roundabout at junction 44 of the M6, north of Carlisle. There £7 million has been invested in making changes to the road, and the signs have been placed to warn drivers about the overnight junction closures. It's believed to be the first time electronic signs have been used in this way to get information to continental truckers.

Highways England senior project manager Steve Mason said the organisation introduced the pilot scheme after listening to feedback from police in the north of England.

"We're a listening and learning organisation and we're determined to improve the way customers get roadworks information," he said. "We carried out major improvements along the A66 near Penrith last year and while the communications and diversion routes worked well, we had some feedback from Cumbria Police that foreign lorry drivers were missing some of the messaging. This not only inconvenienced the drivers but also local communities as we had lorries on inappropriate diversion routes. We've taken that learning on board and hopefully providing tailored messaging for foreign lorry drivers will improve everyone's experience of these roadworks."

Meanwhile, Inspector Steve Minnikin, from Cumbria Police, said the new system would help reduce delays and inconvenience for foreign HGV drivers.

"We provided a lot of support around the A66 closures last year and we're delighted to see that Highways England has responded to our feedback by trialling this idea by being more aware of language differences and being considerate in meeting their needs," he said. "We all believe this will assist the lorry drivers from other countries in rescheduling their journeys and avoid driving into a road closure with all the inconvenience that it can cause themselves and others."

WORD SEARCH ~ PENGUINS

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

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

ADELIE	EMPORER	HUMBOLDT	ROCKHOPPER
AFRICAN	FAIRY	KING	ROYAL
BLUE	FIORDLAND	LITTLE	SNARES
CHATHAM	GALAPOGOS	MACARONI	WAITAHA
CHINSTRAP	GENTOO	MAGELLANIC	YELLOW EYED

HOW CAN YOUR CAR BE HACKED?

While the increasing amount of electronics and connectivity is set to evolve our ways of using the motorcar, the criminal fraternity is devising ways of hacking into your car's systems.

Hacking into the radio frequency of a tyre pressure monitoring system (TPMS) can give false pressure warnings/readings. On a greater scale, should the car's CAN



bus wiring system be accessed, various parts of the car can be shut down, from the air conditioning to the engine. While these security flaws have a safety implication, most hackers wish to achieve a greater personal benefit than simply making mischief – getting control of a high-value vehicle tends to be the priority. With vehicle theft rising in recent years, it is important to be aware of the top five most common methods of 'Vehicle Interference' that the criminal fraternity employs:

1. Hacking keyless entry

Rather than stealing your car keys, criminals use a relay box to boost the signal that keyless fobs emit, fooling the car into thinking that an 'unlock' and 'engine start' request is genuine.

2. Keyless jamming

This works the other way round, where criminals wait for you to alight and use electronic hardware to block any 'locking' signal that a keyless fob may send to your car. This results in the doors remaining unlocked, when you walk away.

3. Security App hacking

Expensive security and vehicle location tracking apps have proven not to be impenetrable – some high-end vehicles are fitted with such equipment as standard. Yet, should the software that protects the servers not be sufficiently robust, hackers can not only locate and unlock vehicles but also deactivate all security features and start the engines as well.

4. OBD hack

The On-Board Diagnostics port (as pictured) is one of the most important aspects of car owners retaining their rights to have a vehicle serviced by independent garages. Yet, in the wrong hands, a hacker can start and drive the vehicle away, as well as programming new keys. Some owners of valuable cars relocate the OBD port to a hidden place and fit a 'dummy' in the usual place to fool thieves.

5. Phone Phishing

With many new cars being equipped with Wi-Fi, hackers can access your mobile telephone via your car. Should you have any mobile-phone apps that you use to control your car over the Internet (such as systems where you can pre-warm the interior before leaving your home), hackers can steal the information to take control instead. This happened previously several years ago. In addition, your personal data can also be compromised.

continued

What you can do?

Firstly, adopt a common sense approach. Never leave valuable items in the car, especially in an obvious place in full view. This includes loading the car with valuable items, prior to leaving it. Park in well-lit areas, in view of CCTV cameras, if possible. Always lock your car and check the doors manually (of possible – some cars unlock as you reapproach them) and never leave the engine running unattended.

Read the fine print in your insurance policy, to check that you are insured against hacking. You may have to demonstrate to the insurer that you took 'reasonable care'. Therefore, if you possess a car with a keyless fob, store it away from the front door and even consider locking it in a secure container. Ask also if the true value of your car will be covered – 'gap' (or agreed value) policies may be worth considering, come renewal time.

Contact your car manufacturer for advice on how the security systems work and if there is anything that you can do to reduce the risk of being hacked. Consider buying a visual deterrent, such a Thatcham Approved steering wheel, gear lever, or pedal lock.

33 NEW MOTORISTS LOST THEIR LICENCES EACH DAY IN 2018

More than 30 new drivers had their licences revoked each day in 2018, a new Freedom of Information request has uncovered.

The data revealed that 11,953 new drivers had their licences revoked under the New Drivers Act in 2018, and almost two-thirds of that total was made up of drivers aged between 17 and 24. These drivers lost their licences after gaining six penalty points within two years of passing their test.

Joshua Harris, director of campaigns for Brake, which commissioned the Freedom of Information request, said: "It's shocking that so many new drivers are racking up enough penalty points to have their licences revoked so soon after passing their test, in particular, those in the 17-24 age bracket.

It reflects statistics which show that drivers aged between 17 and 24 are disproportionately at risk on the UK's roads. They make up a fifth of all drivers killed and seriously injured, despite only making up seven per cent of all licence holders.

The New Drivers Act, introduced in 1995, sees a drivers' licences cancelled if they get six penalty points or more within two years of passing their driving test.

Joshua Harris, director of campaigns for Brake, which commissioned the Freedom of Information request, said: "It's shocking that so many new drivers are racking up enough penalty points to have their licences revoked so soon after passing their test, in particular, those in the 17-24 age bracket.

"It clearly demonstrates that we need to make our licensing system more robust so that when a driver passes their test, they have all the necessary tools and knowledge to drive safely on all roads and in all conditions. Fortunately, there is a proven solution which can deliver this, graduated driver licensing."

HUMOUR IN UNIFORM

Police have arrested the World tongue-twister Champion. I imagine he'll be given a tough sentence.

DRIVING THROUGH AUTUMN: TIPS FROM IAM ROADSMART

It's now officially autumn so we're going to take a look at some of the hazards you may come across. Follow these tips by IAM RoadSmart's head of driving and riding standards, Richard Gladman, to make sure you stay safe whilst driving throughout autumn.

- ◆ Check your battery before the winter arrives. In winter we often place a strain on the battery with lights, heated screens, seats and the air conditioner to demist and keep us warm. If there are any sign of your car battery struggling now, it's likely to let you down as it gets colder
- ◆ Prepare for darker mornings and evenings. You'll be doing a lot more driving in the dark when autumn hits, so ensure you're confident whilst driving in the dark
- ◆ That low winter sun can be an issue so keep a pair of sunglasses in the car and also make use of the sun visor too. If you are dazzled, slow down immediately
- ◆ Now is the time to check your antifreeze levels. The good thing about antifreeze is that it contains additives that prevent corrosion and rust, and during the summer it helps keep the engine from overheating
- ◆ Top up the windscreen washer with de-icing additive - the colder it gets the stronger the solution needs to be
- ◆ Check your windscreen wipers. If they begin to blur the front/rear window or begin making an awful squeaking noise, it's time to replace them with new ones
- ◆ Have a look at your car headlights. It is dangerous for you and for the other road users if your lights do not work properly. Changing a bulb is often a complicated job these days so do it at home and not at the roadside
- ◆ Leaves or pine needles on the road can turn into a mushy film which obscures potholes, road markings and increases stopping distance. Anticipate problems when you approach woods and trees and slow down until the road is clear
- ◆ Watch out for animals. October through to December is considered the highest risk of deer collisions in the UK, so take notice of any wildlife signs that you come across and take extra care
- ◆ There may be more distractions over the next few months with events taking place, such as Guy Fawkes night. There may be fireworks going off so ensure you're alert for any scared animals that may run into the road. Also, Halloween is approaching, so you'll have some ghouls and ghosts walking the streets so be sure to look out for them

Richard said: "As the temperature drops, your car is a nice cosy place to be when it is working properly - sound preparation will help your journey go smoothly.

"Frosty mornings and falling leaves might be picturesque but they can cause all sorts of problems, particularly for two-wheeled road users. Give motorcyclists and cyclists more room and anticipate their actions. *continued*

“Drivers also need to stay alert for blocked drains and localised flooding at this time of year. Your aim should always be to have a clear view of the changing seasons around you, and for other road users to be able to see you.”

Do you get anxious about driving in the dark? If you'd like to improve your driving and gain the confidence to drive at night have a look at our Advanced Driver Course. You'll go out in your own car, with a professional who will be able to talk you through your concerns and improve your driving.

WATCH OUT FOR THE DEER

Recently we published some tips about 'how to safely pass horses on the road', but what other animals may you encounter on your journey?

Observation and anticipation are key to all sound decisions you make whilst driving, and how to avoid animals is no different. IAM RoadSmart's head of driving and riding standards, Richard Gladman, has



put together some tips to keep you safe when driving through deer territory:

- ◆ Collisions with deer are statistically higher during the autumn months due to this being their mating season. According to Govuk, deer are at higher risk between sunset to midnight, also the hours before and after sunrise. October through to December is considered a high-risk period.
- ◆ If you see deer (or other wild animal) warning signs, be sure to slow down and be on high alert. It is likely they will cross the road in this area.
- ◆ Deer are herd animals so if you see one, it's likely there are more. Stay vigilant, if one steps out in front of your car, more may follow.
- ◆ Be prepared to stop and try to warn following drivers with early brake lights or hazards.
- ◆ Try not to swerve to avoid hitting deer – you may drive into a ditch or oncoming traffic.
- ◆ You will most likely brake hard to avoid colliding with an animal, be aware that the traffic behind may not be as alert as you.

What to do if you've hit a deer or see an injured animal on the roadside:

- ◆ Drive to a safe place and pull over
- ◆ Call the police to alert them of the animal and be precise about where it's located
- ◆ Do not approach the animal - it may cause further injury or another accident

Richard Gladman said: “A collision with any animal is unpleasant and we should make every effort to avoid this. A collision with something as large as a deer will be catastrophic. It will likely cause injury to vehicle occupants and itself. It will definitely cause damage to your vehicle - even if it's as small as a Muntjac. Slow down a little and remember we are sharing the wildlife's habitat and not the other way around.”

If you've had a collision that has knocked your confidence, our assessments and advanced courses can help you gain that confidence back.

AMOUNT OF LITTER CLEARED FROM UK MOTORWAYS IS SHOCKING

Motorists are being urged to clean up their act as the organisation responsible for maintaining England's motorways embarks on a litter purge.

According to Highways England, around 200,000 bags of litter have to be removed from the roadside every year, so the organisation is teaming up with environmental charity Keep Britain Tidy to take part in the Great British Spring Clean - an initiative that sees people across the country collect and safely dispose of litter. Although the scheme runs from March 22 and April 23, Highways England has got a head start after beginning litter-picking operations on March 1.



It isn't the first time the two organisations have joined forces, and although last year's operations were made more difficult by the 'Beast from the East', Highways England collected more than 8,000 bags of litter from the side of the road. However, the organisation hopes to better that number this year.

Highways England's head of customer and operational requirements, Freda Rashdi, said littering was taking up valuable resources that could otherwise be used to improve the country's strategic roads.

"Litter is an important national issue and we're pleased to be able to support the Great British Spring Clean," she said. "Litter is unsightly, as well as a risk to wildlife and the environment, but it also puts our workers at risk collecting it and it diverts time and money that could be better spent on improving the network.

"If people don't drop litter in the first place it wouldn't need to be picked up - so we're urging people to take their litter home instead of tossing it out of their car windows."

Allison Ogden Newton, the chief executive of Keep Britain Tidy, said the initiative would save "millions" of small animals living in verges.

"I'm delighted that Highways England has joined forces with us again this year to support the campaign and give our network a spring clean," she said. "Our roadside verges are a haven for wildlife and we know that millions of small mammals are killed every year by litter that has been thrown from vehicles by thoughtless drivers.

"Our army of up to 500,000 volunteers will be delighted to see that Highways England is supporting their efforts by cleaning up the places that they can't get to - our high-speed road network and slip roads, where so much litter is tossed out of car windows."

POLITICS

It has been reported that a Labour MP has been putting turf down his underpants in the hope of getting grass roots support.

COURTS REPORT

- ◆ A student framed his own brother as a drink-driver after he was caught drunk at the wheel of a friend's car. A 21-year-old man pretended to be his sibling, who works in Dubai, when he was arrested for failing a breath test and even posed as him in the dock the next day at Manchester Crown Court. The man was sentenced to three months in jail and given a year-long driving ban.
- ◆ A West Midlands Police detective has been sacked after he was caught driving home whilst over the legal drink-drive limit. A professional misconduct hearing heard that the detective was found to have 85 milligrams of alcohol per 100 millilitres of breath - the legal limit is 35 milligrams. The officer was convicted of driving under the influence of alcohol after he pleaded guilty in court. He was fined £500 and banned from driving for 20 months.
- ◆ A 19-year-old man who died after he was hit by at least three vehicles, including a police car and an ambulance, while lying in a dual carriageway may have been trying to take a short cut home, an inquest heard. He had been drinking with a friend in Rougham, Suffolk. Verdict: road traffic collision.
- ◆ Driving instructors should force learner drivers to read stories involving fatal car crashes in attempts to prevent further loss of life on Britain's roads, a coroner said. A senior coroner, based in Wakefield, West Yorks, made the impassioned plea as he oversaw an inquest into the deaths of four young men who were killed when the car they were travelling in collided head-on with a taxi. The inquest heard the car, driven by one of the young men, had drifted onto the wrong side of the road while travelling at a "colossal" speed of 82mph. The driver was two-and-a-half-times over the drink-drive limit and had taken cocaine hours before the crash. Verdict: road traffic collision.
- ◆ A lawyer was caught speeding in luxury cars seven times in eight months. The man, 49, from Lymm in Cheshire, was clocked five times on the same stretch of road in a £120,000 Porsche. The chief executive of Beyond Corporate Ltd was banned for six months and fined £3,300. Manchester Magistrates called him "a disgrace to his profession".
- ◆ The assistant chief constable of Lincolnshire Police "put lives at risk" when her Mini smashed into an oncoming car as she tried to make a hands-free call to her husband, a court heard. She strayed onto the wrong side of the road moments after leaving the force's headquarters, as she became distracted while trying to find the Bluetooth button on her steering wheel. The other driver suffered whiplash and bruising and had to be taken to hospital. She pleaded guilty to driving without due care and attention and was fined £1,460 and had seven points added to her licence.

IMPROVISATION?

A car breaks down on the hard shoulder of a motorway. The driver opens his boot and lets out two dirty old men in raincoats. The men stand at either end of the car and start flapping their coats open and closed exposing themselves to the passing traffic. A police car soon pulls up and the policeman says "What are those two doing?" "Them" replies the driver. They are my emergency flashers.

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