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EDITORIAL

Hopefully the worst of the weather (and the Covid virus) is now firmly behind us and we can now look forward to seeing some brighter, sunnier days much more conducive to driving pleasure.

One of my pet hates on the road are drivers of automatic cars who sit at traffic lights holding the car on the footbrake. This is particularly annoying at night as you are dazzled as you sit behind them waiting for the lights to change. Most of them probably do not realise the nuisance they are making of themselves, but a little more thought and consideration would go a long way to resolving this unnecessary problem.

Stay safe and enjoy your driving.

MILLION DRIVERS TOOK SPEED AWARENESS COURSE IN 2020 DESPITE FALL IN CAR USE

More than a million drivers took a speed awareness course in 2020 despite car use plummeting due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Analysis of data from the National Driver Offender Retraining Scheme (Ndors) by the PA news agency found that 1.09 million UK drivers completed a course after being caught breaking the speed limit.

The 15% year-on-year decline did not match the reduction in car traffic, which dipped below 50% of normal levels between late March and mid May due to the first Covid-19 lockdown.

Steve Gooding, director of the RAC Foundation, expressed “surprise” that the number of people taking speed awareness courses did not fall further.

He said: “Since March the message from ministers has been simple: don’t drive unless necessary and when you do take to the roads behave responsibly so as not to risk putting further strain on the NHS.

“Of course, not all speeding results in a speed awareness course. Many offenders will have received a fixed penalty notice and some even a prison sentence.”

He added that the “full picture of how motorists responded to Covid-19” will not be known until Home Office figures are released later this year.

There were several incidents of extreme speeding on empty roads during the first lockdown, including a driver clocked doing 151mph on the M62 in West Yorkshire.

Speed awareness courses are offered at the discretion of police forces as an alternative to penalty points and a fine for motorists who commit a minor offence.

Seven Ndors courses are provided by private companies on behalf of the police.

In addition to speeding, they cover areas such as smart motorways, the importance of wearing a seatbelt and motorcycle riding.

Drivers cannot attend more than one course within three years.

The cost for speed awareness courses ranges from £75 to £95 depending on the provider.

All courses are being held online due to the virus crisis.

COPY DATE FOR JUNE SEGMENT IS
4th MAY 2021

WHY YOU SHOULDN'T WAIT FOR THE ORANGE LIGHT BEFORE REFUELLING

Topping up with fuel is a tedious process, especially in winter when it means standing out in the cold for a few minutes. It's why so many motorists put it off until the last possible moment.

However, drivers have been warned that waiting until the orange warning light comes on to top up your tank is not a good idea.

Road safety organisation GEM Motoring

Assist says it's not only bad for your car, but could be dangerous, too.

GEM chief executive Neil Worth commented: "If you permit your car to run out of fuel, you risk serious damage to the engine as well as potentially putting yourself and your passengers at risk of a collision because you will not be choosing where the car finally gives up."

"Check you have enough fuel for a journey. If you need to refuel, plan where you will stop so there is no risk whatsoever that you will run out."

One component that could be at risk if you run your fuel low is the electric fuel pump motor. Fuel acts like a coolant for it, so running low can suck in air, which creates heat, and increases wear.

Running low fuel also risks filling the fuel filter with dirt that's been dragged from the bottom of the tank, reducing its performance.

There are two more practical reasons, too. The first is that you could run out in a dangerous place, such as a motorway. GEM warns drivers have been prosecuted in the past after a collision has happened because they have stopped after running out of fuel.

And finally, it reduces your chances of shopping around. If you never let your tank drop below a quarter, it allows you to wait until you're near a filling station with lower prices rather than being forced to top up at the closest place.



ROADSIGN OF THE TIMES



DEALING WITH LOW SUN: TIPS FROM IAM ROADSMART

With spring now here the sun is rising earlier. So, if you are making an essential journey, being dazzled by the sun can be a major and potentially risky distraction.

Even though there are many tools that can help protect drivers and riders from the glare, they often get overlooked. So IAM RoadSmart's head of driving and riding standard Richard Gladman has

these useful tips on how to stay safe on the road when the glare of the sun is at its peak.



- ◆ Keep your windscreen clean both inside and out; a dirty screen will magnify the glare.
- ◆ On the outside, check for chips or cracks. Replace worn wiper blades and make sure your washer bottle is kept well topped up with good quality screen wash to help remove any wayward insects.
- ◆ Keep a cloth or chamois to wipe away the dirt that builds up on the inside.
- ◆ Use your sun visor. It may sound obvious, but a surprising number of people forget and often don't realise the visor can help with glare from the side windows.
- ◆ Invest in polarised sunglasses, specialist driving ones are available. Remember to take a rest, your eyes will strain quickly if you are squinting. Read our sunglasses tips for more information.
- ◆ If you are dazzled by the sun, slow down and leave extra space between yourself and the driver ahead. This will give you more time to assess the situation and make sure you stay safe.
- ◆ Remember that when the sun is low behind you, you might be able to see just fine, but oncoming drivers might not see you, make sure you give them extra space where possible.

Richard said: "By keeping the screen clean and your view shaded where possible, you will give yourself the best chance of staying safe. If you are wearing sunglasses, bear in mind that the protection they offer will be magnified by any tinted windows make sure you can still see properly out of the side windows and remember to keep them clean – it's amazing how distorting a build of residue from handling can be. Be ready to take them off in tunnels or shaded areas but keep them close to hand."

AS EASY AS RIDING A BIKE

I went to the liquor store on Friday afternoon on my bicycle, bought a bottle of scotch and put it in the bicycle basket.

As I was about to leave, I thought to myself that if I fell off the bicycle the bottle would break.

So, I drank all the scotch before I cycled home.

It turned out to be a very good decision because I fell off my bicycle seven times on the way home.

NEW ELECTRIC CAR BATTERY CAN CHARGE IN 10 MINUTES AND KEEP GOING FOR 250 MILES, SCIENTISTS SAY

Electric car batteries have been developed that are capable of charging in 10 minutes and would allow a driver to travel for 250 miles.

The new lithium ion phosphate batteries, built by US scientists, can quickly heat up and cool down - which is the key to rapid charging and long life.

Scientists at Penn State University have invented a battery which matches a Porsche's performance and lasts a lifetime.

Tesla's Roadster, considered to be the gold standard of electric vehicles, can run for around 600 miles without charging but it costs more than £180,000 and usually takes hours to charge.

While electric cars are becoming increasingly popular in the UK, the fear of running out of power while travelling remains a deterrent for motorists.

There were around 164,100 pure electric cars on UK roads and over 373,600 plug-in hybrids as of September 2020.

Professor Chao-Yang Wang, who worked on the research, said: "We developed a pretty clever battery for mass-market electric vehicles with cost parity with combustion engine vehicles.

"There is no more range anxiety and this battery is affordable."

To recharge, batteries need to heat up to around 60C (140F) and then cool down when they are not being used.

Despite their small size, the batteries produce a large amount of power in a matter of seconds and have a lifespan of 2 million miles, the researchers said.

Professor Wang said: "An electric vehicle with this battery could go from zero to 60mph in three seconds and would drive like a Porsche."

He said the discovery could make electric vehicles more affordable.

The findings were published in the journal Nature Energy.

£4 FOR 8MPH: SPEED TICKET IS 125 YEARS OLD

Slower than a speeding...pullet! It was 125 years ago that the first driver to break the speed limit in Britain was facing swift justice - for doing 8mph.

Engineer Walter Arnold was clocked at four times the legal limit of 2mph, but slower than a chicken which can do 9mph, in his horseless carriage at Paddock Wood, Kent on January 28, 1896.

A policeman on a bicycle easily overtook Mr Arnold's Benz car, imported from Germany and no doubt asked if he had any idea why he had been stopped.

At Tonbridge police station he was charged with using a locomotive without a horse, not having a man with a red flag walking ahead, having fewer than three people in charge of the vehicle and not having his name and address on it.

Two days later he was fined £4 and seven shillings - around £260 today. Only ten shillings was for speeding.

Ten months later the Locomotives on Highways Act created a light locomotive category, exempt from the three-man crew rule and free to do 14mph.

Mr Arnold's fine, thought to be a stunt to publicise his family firm's version of the Benz, earned him a Guinness World Record.

The first car had arrived in Britain just six months earlier. By 1896 there were 15, with 800 five years later. There are now 40 million cars, with traffic cops and speed cameras dishing out 2.3 million tickets a year.

WHERE IS IT ILLEGAL TO PARK YOUR CAR?

Parking is something we like to moan about. Whether it's excessive charges, a shortage of spaces or a clamping nightmare, the issue is never far from a motorist's mind.

The subject of where you can and can't park is more complex than you might think. If it's been a while since you read the Highway Code, you might have forgotten where you're not allowed to stop or park. Similarly, you might be in the dark when it comes to parking outside your own home.

Here, we reveal the places where it's illegal to park your car, along with a few facts about parking in the UK.

Yellow lines

Most drivers are aware that yellow lines relate to parking restrictions, although many choose to ignore the signs. Double yellow lines indicate a prohibition of waiting at ANY TIME, even if there are no upright signs. Basically, you cannot park on double yellow lines.

Things aren't so clear when it comes to single yellow lines. You **MUST NOT** wait or park on yellow lines during the times of operation shown on the signs or at the entrance to a Controlled Parking Zone. Often, you'll find that parking restrictions are lifted overnight or at weekends.

You **MUST NOT** wait, park, set down or pick up on school entrance markings when upright signs indicate a prohibition of stopping.

Parking by the roadside

The Highway Code says you must use off-street parking areas or bays marked out by white lines whenever possible. If you have to stop by the roadside, you must adhere to the following rules:

- ◆ Do not park facing against the traffic flow
- ◆ Stop as close as you can to the side of the road
- ◆ Do not stop too close to a vehicle displaying a Blue Badge
- ◆ Do not park in spaces reserved for Blue Badge holders, residents or motorcycles

There are specific rules regarding parking partially or wholly on the pavement. [Click here](#) for more information.

Where you **MUST NOT stop or park**

The Highway Code goes on to list the following places where you **MUST NOT** stop or park:

- ◆ The carriageway or the hard shoulder of a motorway except in an emergency
- ◆ A pedestrian crossing, including the zig-zag lines
- ◆ A clearway
- ◆ Taxi bays
- ◆ An Urban Clearway during its hours of operation
- ◆ A road marked with double white lines in the middle, even when a broken white line is on your side of the road. The exception is to pick up or set down passengers, or to load and unload goods
- ◆ A tram or cycle lane during its hours of operation
- ◆ A cycle track
- ◆ Red lines, unless otherwise indicated by signs

continued

Other parking restrictions

Rule 243 of the Highway Code says DO NOT stop or park in the following places:

- ◆ Near a school entrance
- ◆ Anywhere you would prevent access for emergency services
- ◆ At or near a bus/tram stop or taxi rank
- ◆ On the approach to a level crossing or tramway crossing
- ◆ Opposite or within 10 metres (32 feet) of a junction, except in an authorised parking space
- ◆ Near the brow of a hill or humpback bridge
- ◆ Opposite a traffic island or another parked vehicle
- ◆ Where you would force other traffic to enter a tram lane
- ◆ Where the kerb has been lowered to help wheelchair users and powered mobility vehicles
- ◆ In front of an entrance to a property
- ◆ On a bend
- ◆ Where you would obstruct cyclists' use of cycle facilities
EXCEPT when forced to do so by stationary traffic.

What happens if someone parks on your driveway?

Although you're not allowed to park in front of an entrance to a property, there's nothing to stop someone parking outside your house. A recent Uswitch survey of 1,000 Brits found that 60 percent of drivers thought they were legally entitled to park in the spot outside their home. A quarter of drivers would happily 'steal' the spot outside your house.

Hannah Parsons, a solicitor at DAS Law, says: "A homeowner has no special legal right to park directly outside their property. All road users have the same right to park anywhere on the public highway as long as they do not contravene parking restrictions."

Things aren't so clear cut when it comes to parking on a driveway. As Hannah Parsons explains, it's not a criminal offence.

"If a vehicle is parked on your driveway without your permission, they are trespassing. As trespass is a civil and not criminal offence, the police will not always get involved. At most, they may send an officer to try and determine the owner of the vehicle and ask them to move it."

Once the car is on a driveway, it's technically on private property – where the local council has no jurisdiction. A council will remove an abandoned car from private or public property, but if the vehicle is taxed, insured and has a valid MOT they're unlikely to touch it.

Florence Codjoe, a car insurance expert at Uswitch, said: "Whilst it's really frustrating to find a vehicle parked outside your home for weeks or months, it's the decision of your local council as to whether it's removed. If the vehicle is damaged, causing an obstruction, uninsured and without road tax [Vehicle Excise Duty], it's likely the council will remove it."

continued

Taking revenge by blocking the car in question isn't recommended. Hannah Parsons says: "If someone has parked on your driveway and you were to block them in, your vehicle may be causing an obstruction to the public highway and this is a criminal offence. The owner of the vehicle could therefore call the police."

This is a view shared by Paul Watters of the AA. He warns: "Frustrating though this may be, what you can't do is pop a line of cones on the road outside. You're then committing a criminal offence because they could cause an accident.

"This counts as obstruction and a penalty charge could be issued."

Penalties for illegal parking

The Traffic Management Act 2004 was introduced to tackle congestion and disruption on the road network. It gives local authorities more power to manage parking policies, coordinate street works and enforce some moving traffic offences.

A Penalty Charge Notice (PCN) might be enforced and issued through the civil rather than the criminal justice system. The fine may be either £70 or £50, depending on the impact of the offence.

The PCN is discounted by 50 percent to £35 or £25 if paid within 14 days of receiving the ticket. If the fine is left unpaid, the local authority can pursue the debt through the County Court.

DRIVING LAW 2021: WHAT ARE THE MAIN CHANGES THIS YEAR?

Brexit changes to international travel

If you're driving in the EU in your own vehicle, you'll need a green card, your driving licence and a GB sticker on your number plate.

Your green card is proof that your car is insured, you can usually get one of these from your insurance provider.

Make sure you leave plenty of time to get one before your trip.

If you're taking your own car and your trip is less than 12 months, you'll need to take your V5C logbook with you.

If it's a car you've hired or leased, you'll need to take VE103 form which proves you can take it out of the UK.

For more information on this visit GOV.UK.

In some cases, you might need an international driving permit. Read our guide for more information.

Stricter penalties for mobile phone use

A loophole that meant people could get away with taking photos or videos while driving has been closed.

So in 2021, you can get a £200 fine and six points on your licence if you're caught holding your phone or sat nav while you're driving.

'Holding' also means scrolling through a playlist, playing a game or using social media.

Low Emission Zones postponed until 2021

Low Emission Zones are areas of a city that charge vehicles with high emissions to enter. They're usually found in areas that have high levels of pollution.

Some Low Emission Zones were planned for 2020 but were delayed due to the coronavirus. Here's the latest:

Birmingham's Low Emission Zone will now go ahead this year after a delay.

continued

You can enter the zone with no charge if your vehicle is:

- ◆ A moped or motorcycle
- ◆ A diesel vehicle, minimum standard Euro 6
- ◆ A petrol vehicle, minimum standard Euro 4
- ◆ A vehicle with zero emissions (electric or hydrogen)
- ◆ A low emissions vehicle

From 25 October 2021 London's Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ) will extend to create a single, larger zone bounded by the North Circular Road (A406) and the South Circular Road (A205).

You can see if your vehicle can travel in the ULEZ by using the Transport for London (TFL) vehicle checker.

MOT extension ends

Earlier this year, the Prime Minister announced an extension to MOTs. This meant that if your MOT was due between 31 March and 31 July, you wouldn't have to get an MOT for six months.

The last date you could have an MOT extension was 31 July 2020, so if you're in that category then you should arrange to get your MOT this month.

E10 fuel proposed for this year

A new cleaner petrol known as E10 could be rolled out in 2021.

The fuel aims to reduce carbon emissions. It's estimated that using E10 is the equivalent of taking 350,000 cars off the road.

Automatic Lane Keeping Systems approved

Automatic Lane Keeping Systems (ALKS) keep cars in lane automatically at low speeds. And for the first time, drivers will be able to delegate control of the vehicle.

The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) approved ALKS in June 2020.

The system should be introduced in spring this year, but it depends on the outcome of the safety evidence gathered between August and October 2020.

Green number plates for cars with zero emissions

Electric or zero emission car drivers will now have green number plates.

The idea behind the plates is to promote green vehicles by making them more visible.

Vehicles with these plates could access cheaper parking and free entry into Low Emission Zones.

The new plates will have a green stripe or flash on the left-hand side of the plate.

Speed limiters mandatory in new cars from 2022

Looking further ahead, in 2022, speed limiters will be mandatory in all new cars.

The speed limiter – known as an Intelligent Speed Assistant system (ISA) – alerts drivers if they're going too fast. If the driver doesn't slow their speed the car will intervene.

The limiter can be over-ridden in some circumstances, for example if you're overtaking.

HUMOUR IN MEDICINE

What did the surgeon say to the patient who insisted on closing up their own incision? Suture self.

WHAT ARE PREMIUM FUELS AND ARE THEY WORTH IT?

There's a good chance that when filling up you've seen premium fuels on offer. They're often more expensive than 'regular' petrol and diesel, commanding more pence per litre with the promise of better efficiency – among other things.

But the question is, are premium fuels really worth it? And what do they actually do?

So just what are premium fuels?

So-called premium fuels promise better engine response, smoother running, lower emissions and improved fuel economy. When it comes to petrol, premium options deliver a higher octane rating. Whereas regular unleaded has an octane rating of 95 in the UK, super unleaded increases this to between 98 and 100. This higher rating unlocks the engine's full potential and allows it to run more effectively.

Many petrol retailers offer premium fuels. There's Shell V-Power, BP Ultimate and Esso Synergy Supreme, for example.

Diesel, meanwhile, features a higher cetane rating in premium versions compared to standard ones. It means that the fuel ignites quicker when subjected to pressure in the engine.

So what do they promise?

Premium unleaded is said to have an effect on throttle response, engine smoothness and emissions, too. They're mostly pitched towards use in performance cars, as more highly tuned engines react more favourably to higher -octane fuels. There's a good chance you'll notice that the powertrain responds more keenly to throttle inputs when it's using premium fuel.

Premium diesel, meanwhile, can't have too much of an effect on engine responses but does promise cleaner running with fewer particulates being emitted through the exhaust.

Should I run my car on premium fuels the whole time?

It depends. If you've got a high-end sports or performance car, then you'll likely notice the switch to premium fuel. That'll particularly be the case when it comes to longer trips, where the fuel has more opportunity to work through the engine's system.

Diesel owners will most likely see the benefit of premium fuel if they've been struggling with a sooty engine. These fuels can do well to 'clean' the engine of any deposits left over, so if you're trying to rid your car of any sooty emissions from the tailpipe, then using a premium diesel could be a good option.

What is the price difference?

The difference between regular and super unleaded is quite large. In fact, at the time of writing petrol was at an average price of 114p a litre, while premium commanded 129p per litre. That's quite the increase in price and will certainly make quite the difference over a whole tank of fuel.

In fact, if you filled up a regular family-sized car with regular fuel, a 55-litre tank would cost £62.70 to brim. Do the same with premium fuels, and you'll have to stump up £70.95 for the privilege.

continued



Should I use premium fuels as a way of maintaining my car instead?

It's a good idea. Rather than using a premium fuel each time you fill up, look at instead as a way of preserving the life of your engine. Perhaps prior to undertaking a longer journey fill up with super unleaded or premium diesel and allow it to effectively work through the engine.

By doing this, you allow these fuels to clean your engine. Over longer trips, your engine can properly warm up and clear any deposits. It's a good technique to use prior to an MOT, too, when engines have to be at their cleanest in order to meet emissions tests.

WHY DRIVING THROUGH PUDDLES RISKS A FINE OR POINTS ON YOUR LICENCE

Walking along the pavement and getting soaked by a car going through a puddle is likely to ruin your day.

But karma is on your side: in the eyes of the law, the driver is the one who could come off worse. They risk a fine, or even points on their licence.

Surprisingly though, one in three motorists readily admit to having splashed pedestrians whilst driving, either intentionally or by accident.

A common occurrence

Comparison website Uswitch undertook a survey of more than 1,200 drivers to discover what drivers do when faced with puddles.

One in eighteen UK drivers from the sample said that they had deliberately soaked a pedestrian by driving through water. Those aged between 17 and 24 were more likely to commit the act, with 32 percent admitting to it.

Whilst almost half of those asked (45 percent) said they would feel remorse, this was not consistent across the country. Scottish drivers were most remorseful, but those from Yorkshire were most likely to have no guilt at all.

What does the law actually say?

Splashing pedestrians can be an offence of careless or inconsiderate driving, covered by section 3ZA of the Road Traffic Act 1988.

Inconsiderate driving is the simpler offence to prove. It needs only to show that someone else has been inconvenienced by your actions.

It is used where "driving amounts to a clear act of incompetence, selfishness, impatience or aggressiveness in addition to some other inconvenience."

The Crown Prosecution Service also makes specific reference to "driving through a puddle causing pedestrians to be splashed" in its guidance for road traffic offence charging decisions.

Money down the drain

Given that 33 percent of pedestrians would report drivers to the police for splashing them, the risk of punishment is real. Smartphones and CCTV add to the potential for incriminating evidence being available.

For the simplest offences, drivers could be issued a £100 and have three penalty points added to their licence. However, a court could have the potential to impose a fine of up to £5,000 in the most serious cases.

Florence Codjoe, Uswitch car insurance expert, notes that drivers will also be hit when it comes to renewing their insurance.

Having a motoring conviction means "insurers will see you as a greater risk and your insurance premiums will increase" accordingly.



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

8th June 2021
To be advised

14th September 2021
To be Advised

14th December 2021
Christmas Quiz
(with buffet)

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.

NEW RESEARCH SHOWS OVERWHELMING SUPPORT FOR 12-MONTH MINIMUM LEARNING PERIOD FOR NEW DRIVERS

New research conducted by IAM RoadSmart, the UK's largest independent road safety charity, has found overwhelming support for a 12-month minimum learning period for new drivers before they are allowed to take the practical driving test.

In its in-depth survey of more than 2,000 motorists, the charity found that more than two-thirds (68 per cent) strongly backed the suggestion that all new drivers, regardless of age, should undergo at least a year's training and supervised practice before being allowed to take their practical test.

And while the Government committed to investigating some form of Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL) in 2019, including the possibility of a 12-month minimum learning period as a key component, they have still not offered any firm conclusions.

IAM RoadSmart is therefore calling for urgent action on this issue. The charity, citing the evidence presented to the recent House of Commons Transport Committee Inquiry into Young and Novice Drivers along with the strong public support demonstrated in this latest study, says that a move to Graduated Driver Licensing is a crucial step forward in improved road safety.

Neil Greig, IAM RoadSmart Director of Policy & Research, said: "The Government must listen to the concerns of the vast majority of motorists who clearly understand the long-term safety benefits that a 12-month minimum learning period for all new drivers would bring.

"A lifetime of safe driving starts by gaining the right experience behind the wheel. Even the Government's own statistics show that one in five new drivers crash within their first year on the road, so a longer learning period can only help make our roads safer for all road users."

Meanwhile, the study found that around two-thirds (65 per cent) of people also support more encouragement for post-test training, believing that it would be beneficial for drivers to improve their skills through advanced driver training and testing. This rises to 71 per cent among drivers aged 17 to 49.

Neil added: "Lessons learnt at the start of your driving career can pay dividends and if new drivers had longer to experience all road types, in all weathers and at all times of the day and night before their test, the benefits can only increase. Experienced license holders need to update their observation, anticipation and planning

LEMON SQUEEZE

There once was a religious young woman who went to Confession. Upon entering the confessional, she said, 'Forgive me, Father, for I have sinned.' The priest said, 'Confess your sins and be forgiven.'

The young woman said, 'Last night my boyfriend made mad passionate love to me seven times.'

The priest thought long and hard and then said, 'Squeeze seven lemons into a glass and then drink the juice.'

The young woman asked, 'Will this cleanse me of my sins?'

The priest said, 'No, but it will wipe that smile off of your face.'

HOW TO PREVENT CATALYTIC CONVERTER THEFT FROM CARS

Recent years have seen a dramatic increase in theft of catalytic converters from cars. These exhaust components are highly sought-after by criminals due to the precious metals inside: palladium, platinum and rhodium.

Catalytic converters (commonly known as 'cats') contain up to seven grams of these metals, making them worth several hundred pounds on the black market.

And hybrid cars, notably the Toyota Prius, are particularly at risk.

New research highlights the continued problem of catalytic converter theft. Admiral says it received 400 claims in January alone, with thefts on the rise following the original lockdown. Lorna Connelly, head of claims at Admiral, said: "The increase since June has been significant, and shows thieves are back to stealing the precious metals found in catalytic converters in some cars, which are then being sold on for a profit.

"Palladium, platinum, and rhodium found in the converters are worth a fortune to thieves. Currently, palladium is even more valuable than gold, rhodium is worth almost two thirds of the value of gold, and platinum is around half the value of gold.

Here's what you need to know – including how to reduce the risk of catalytic converter theft from your car.

What does a catalytic converter do?

A catalytic converter is part of a modern car's exhaust system. It processes the emissions from a combustion engine into less harmful gases, before releasing them into the atmosphere.

Catalytic converters were first used in the 1970s, with the United States making them mandatory from 1975 onwards. They became a common feature of cars in the UK from 1992.

Why are they a target for theft?

The chemical reaction that takes place within the converter requires precious metals to act as the actual catalyst. These include palladium, platinum and rhodium.

Market values for these rare materials have increased substantially in the past 18 months.

Palladium can be sold for £1,500 per ounce, with rhodium worth up to £6,700 per ounce. Both figures are higher than the price of gold.

How do thieves steal catalytic converters?

As part of the exhaust system, catalytic converters are left exposed beneath most cars. This means thieves can simply slide under the car to remove them. SUVs are particularly at risk, as their raised ride height makes access beneath the car easier.

Some are bolted onto the exhaust, with other types being welded into place. The latter can be removed by cutting through the pipework to free the cat.

Most catalytic converters are unmarked, meaning they cannot be easily traced to an individual vehicle. Once taken, they can be sold to unlicensed scrap metal dealers.

Why are hybrid cars being targeted?

Hybrid vehicles, such as the Toyota Prius, account for a large proportion of the catalytic converters being stolen. Admiral data shows that the Prius, Honda Jazz, Toyota Auris and Lexus RX are the cars most susceptible to theft.

continued

Thieves target these vehicles as the catalytic converters are said to be less corroded. The hybrid drivetrain results in lower overall exhaust emissions, leaving the precious metals in better condition.

In turn, this makes them more valuable to sell on.

What are manufacturers doing to help?

The problem of catalytic converter theft is not new, with the AA noting that it has been an issue for more than a decade. This has given manufacturers time to develop ways of keeping cats safe.

Toyota offers a special 'Catloc' device, which can be retrofitted to a number of vehicles made by the manufacturer. Priced between £200 to £250 including fitting, Toyota has said it sells the Catloc without making a profit.

The company has also reduced the price of replacement catalytic converters, and increased production to help get drivers back on the road quicker.

What can I do to protect my catalytic converter?

Not all cars are at such risk, with some models having the catalytic converter mounted within the engine bay. This makes it much harder to steal. Drivers should check with their local dealership if they are unsure.

The Met Police has also published advice on reducing the risk of your cat being stolen. The tips include:

- ◆ Parking your car in a locked garage overnight
- ◆ Trying to park in a location that is well-lit and overlooked
- ◆ Avoid mounting your car on the kerb as it gives thieves easier access
- ◆ Installing CCTV to cover where your car is parked
- ◆ Marking your catalytic converter with a forensic marker (see below), which can make it harder to sell on
- ◆ Speak to a car dealer about a tilt sensor that activates an alarm if a thief try's to jack up your vehicle

Security marking a catalytic converter

Security marking is a cost effective way to reduce the risk of catalytic converter theft. This uses metal etching to leave a permanent mark on the outside of the catalytic converter, intended to make it harder for thieves to sell on.

Kent-based Selectamark, for example, sells a kit specially designed for marking catalytic converters. Priced at £11.99 plus VAT, it includes warning stickers for the windows as a visual deterrent.

The kit also includes registration on a secure database, helping link the cat to the owner should it be sold to a scrap metal dealer.

The cost is a relatively small outlay, given that replacement catalytic converters can stretch to more than £1,000.

5 THINGS EVERY DRIVER SHOULD CHECK BEFORE SETTING OFF

It's always a good idea to plan ahead when heading out for a drive, and that's particularly true in the winter months and when taking longer journeys.

It might seem like a pain to regularly go through these checks, but taking a moment to plan ahead could make a huge difference later in your journey. Though the vast majority of us aren't travelling as further afield as we might usually do, it's a good idea to brush up on these pre-flight checks regardless. With this in mind, here are five checks every driver should make before hitting the road.

Mirrors

If you're the only person that drives your car, it's likely your mirrors will only ever need to be moved once. However, checking before you set off that your rear-view and wing mirrors are correctly angled will ensure there's no danger of you missing something out on the road – you might have moved your seat slightly to get comfortable and found it's thrown your setup out of line.

The rear-view mirror is pretty simple, but the wing mirrors should be angled so that the edge of the car is only just in view. This will give you the widest field of view to the side and reduce your blind spot.

If you share your car with others this check is even more vital, because trying to move your mirrors while driving could be very dangerous indeed.

Fuel

Often when you're driving home the last thing you want to do is top up with fuel. That's why it tends to be setting off when your tank is empty. If you pull away in a rush without glancing at the fuel tank you might find yourself merrily pootling down the motorway when the warning light comes on and you have no idea when the next services might be.

Quickly checking your range can save a lot of stress down the line.

Washer fluid

This is something that's particularly important during the winter months, when road grit is constantly being kicked up onto your windscreen. You don't necessarily need to check under the bonnet every time you leave, but a quick squirt will let you know if there's water in the tank, and if the warning lights come on, be sure to fill up as soon as possible.

Tyres

Tyres are another aspect that it can be frustrating to regularly check, because tread wear happens at a slow pace. However, with your tyres being the only point of contact with the road, their quality is vital.

Firstly, check that they are well above the legal tread limit of 1.6mm – if you don't have a proper tool, you can use a 20 pence piece to measure by seeing if the band around the edge is visible. Secondly, scan the surface of the rubber for any damage or bulging, because this could indicate that a puncture or blowout is imminent.

Lights and number plates

Again, dirty winter roads can cake your car in dirt. While that's not an issue for many people, it's worth checking just how filthy your car has become just in case it's reached illegal levels.

If your headlights and taillights are obscured you could become a danger to others on the road and yourself by reducing your ability to see ahead and others' ability to see you. Furthermore, an obscured number plate could see you getting in trouble with the police.

Have a quick look around the car and check nothing is obscured, and if it is, at the very least give the most important areas a quick wipe down.

THOUGHT PROVOKING?

- ◆ Prison is just one word to you, but for some people, it's a whole sentence.
- ◆ Scientists got together to study the effects of alcohol on a person's walk. The result was staggering.

WORD SEARCH ~ OXFORD AND CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITIES

Hidden in the grid below are the names of 24 different
Oxford and Cambridge Universities.

They may read horizontally, vertically or diagonally, but always in straight lines.

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

BALLIOL	EMMANUEL	MAGDALEN	QUEENS
BRASENOSE	GIRTON	MERTON	SELWYN
CHURCHILL	GREYFRIARS	NUFFIELD	TEMPLETON
CLARE	HOMERTON	ORIEL	TRINITY
DARWIN	JESUS	PEMBROKE	WADHAM
DOWNING	KEBLE	PETERHOUSE	WOLFSON

WHAT TO DO IF YOU'RE INVOLVED IN A COLLISION: TIPS FROM IAM ROADSMART

If you've been involved in a collision, you'll know how scary it can be. But do you, and your family and friends, know what to do when it happens?

Although many of us are spending a lot less time on the road this year, the chance of a collision still remains. So, Richard Gladman, IAM RoadSmart's head of driving and riding standards, has these helpful tips on the steps to follow if an incident occurs:

- ◆ Stop your vehicle as soon as possible, if it is safe to do so. Your hazard lights may have already come on but if not, switch them on to alert other motorists. Failing to stop is an offence. If you can't stop at the scene, you must report the collision to the police as soon as practicable, and in any case within 24 hours.
- ◆ Speak to the other driver(s) involved. You need to supply your name and address, the details of the owner of the car and the insurance details if you have them. Make sure you record these details from the other driver(s) as you will need them if you make an insurance claim.
- ◆ Take photos of any damage on your car and theirs. Try to get at least one photo which includes the registration number. Shots of the area where the collision happened may also be useful.
- ◆ If you're involved in a collision on the motorway and you're uninjured and able to get the vehicle to the hard shoulder or emergency refuge, make sure you move to a safe place like behind the Armco barrier. If you are in a live lane and unable to move, put your hazard lights on and call for help. Knowing which carriageway, you are on (either A or B) will help the emergency services locate you.
- ◆ In a residential area, ensure your hazard lights are on and move to a safe place to inspect your vehicle. If you or any other party is injured call an ambulance.
- ◆ Remain calm. You may be in shock and it's normal to feel shaken after a collision, but it's important you do not drive away until you feel safe to do so.
- ◆ Do not admit liability. Stick to the facts and report these accurately to your insurance company.
- ◆ If there are witnesses make sure you speak to them and get their details. They may be able to give a statement to the police or to your insurance company.
- ◆ If you have a dashcam, the footage could be useful to the police and your insurance company to help apportion blame. Make sure you save it and don't allow it to overwrite.

When should you call the police?

- ◆ If anyone involved is injured, the road is blocked, or the location is such that danger is being caused.
- ◆ If the collision involves a large animal or a dog and the owner is not present.
- ◆ If you think the other driver is under the influence of drink or drugs or is guilty of a traffic offence.

continued

- ◆ If the driver doesn't stop or refuses to exchange details or leaves the scene.
- ◆ If you have suspicions, speak to the police. They may not attend but will record the call and give advice.

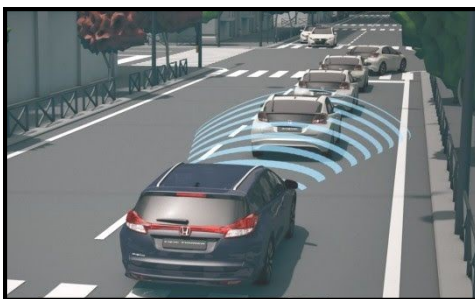
If you've been involved in an incident and feel you have lost some confidence on the road, you may benefit from an Advanced Driver Course or if you want some support with particular aspects of driving, our Driver Assessment may help.

Richard said: "Being involved in a collision can be stressful. Even a minor bump can disable a car and prove costly. Make sure you get as much information as you can from the other driver and any witnesses.

"Try to stay calm. It is likely that no matter who is to blame, the other party is feeling just as much stress as you are. The main priority is to make sure everyone is safe whilst dealing with the collision."

MOTORISTS NEED MORE TRAINING IF DRIVER ASSISTANCE SYSTEMS ARE TO BE EFFECTIVE, SAFETY EXPERTS WARN

The automotive industry needs to come together to ensure motorists understand driver assistance systems if they are to be effective, according to a road safety charity. IAM RoadSmart has made the call to car manufacturers, dealerships, the Driving and Vehicle Standards



Agency and driving instructors following a report by the Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile (FIA).

The FIA is best known for governing professional motorsport but also represents the interests of motoring organisations and drivers. A new report called 'How to maximise the road safety benefits of ADAS' warns that awareness and understanding of these advanced driver assistance systems is poor among motorists.

It found that most drivers do not receive any training in how to use these systems and tend to rely on either reading the user manual or, more dangerously, applying a trial and error approach.

Neil Greig, IAM RoadSmart director of policy and research, said: "Advanced driver assistance systems have the potential to improve road safety, but only if used correctly.

"If used incorrectly, not least without a full understanding of what the systems are and are not capable of, they can have the opposite effect, with potentially worrying consequences for all road users.

"IAM RoadSmart therefore believes the time has now come to include a comprehensive lesson from every car dealer supplying vehicles and further, for more about ADAS to be included in the UK driving test. This is crucial as these tools begin to be supplied as standard on an increasing number of vehicles."

The organisation says it endorses the FIA's recommendations that drivers should receive better training on how systems work and their limitations, improved performance of ADAS systems, and the introduction of fail-safe alerts should a system stop working.

ALL THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF PEDESTRIAN CROSSINGS: EXPLAINED

There are numerous pedestrian crossings around that assist pedestrians in crossing roads. During your driving test, the examiner will be looking out for how you deal with pedestrian crossings to make sure that you are approaching them in the safest possible way. Learner drivers are often caught out on pedestrian crossings in the driving test and it is a common reason for failing due to the strict regulations of examiners.

In this article we will go through the different types of pedestrian crossings that you might come across, and how to approach these correctly.

Pedestrian crossings come in two different types – uncontrolled and controlled.

In the next section, we will explain the important distinguishing features of both types and how you should properly approach each different type.

The following three are uncontrolled crossings:

Zebra Crossing

It is likely that you will be familiar with zebra crossings and will have used them as a pedestrian. They are uncontrolled crossings which are marked by black and white stripes on the road, you will also notice two yellow beacons on either side of the road which will be flashing. Leading up to the zebra crossing there will be zigzag lines on both sides of the road to highlight there is a pedestrian crossing ahead – these are a no parking zone.

On your approach to the zebra crossing, you need to check if there is anyone at the crossing, on the crossing or if there is a pedestrian that will soon be about to cross. Depending on what the situation is you need to either slow down or come to a stop. Make sure that you allow the pedestrian to fully cross the road before you set off again.

In some cases, you will find a central island, splitting two smaller zebra crossings, on wider sections of road. If you approach this sort of zebra crossing you do not need to stop if there is a person waiting to cross on the other side of the road to where you are driving.

Contrary to what you may have seen, it is not good practice to wave someone across on a zebra crossing. It is up to the pedestrian themselves to decide if they wish to cross, as there may be waiting to see if the car on the other side of the road is going to stop also. You must never overtake a vehicle at a zebra crossing.

School Warden Crossing

Another uncontrolled crossing is a school warden crossing. This is where a lollipop person in a bright yellow jacket is in place to help children to cross the road, usually near the entrance of a school but also on busier roads nearby.

Make sure you keep a look out for such warden crossings when you are driving near a school, especially if you are driving near to school start and finish times. Practice the mirror signal manoeuvre routine on approach to the crossing and be ready to stop should the warden signal for you to do so. Always drive with caution near to a school as there will be children who could potentially run into the road or attempt to cross without the warden's help.

Tiger Crossing

A Tiger crossing combines a pedestrian zebra crossing with a crossing for cyclists. They are called tiger crossings because early examples featured yellow stripes on black tarmac.

continued

The first tiger crossing was installed was in London, but the concept is common in the Netherlands. Unlike toucan crossings, they feature dedicated lanes for pedestrians and cyclists. This makes them ideal for use on cycle lanes.

In all cases, pedestrians and cyclists must check that the traffic has stopped before the start to cross the road. Always cross between the studs or over the zebra markings, and do not loiter on the pedestrian crossing.

The following four are controlled crossings:

A controlled crossing is a crossing that is controlled by traffic lights. Below are some of the most common controlled crossings that you will come across.

Pelican Crossing

Perhaps one of the most familiar pedestrian crossings is the pelican crossing. This is controlled by a set of traffic lights, and pedestrians can request to cross by pressing a button and waiting for the green man to indicate they can cross. There is also usually a beeping sound to accompany the green man. The red light will be on for drivers as the green man shows for pedestrians.

When the green man starts flashing the amber light will flash for drivers – during this time drivers should not move if there are still pedestrians crossing the road. If there are no more pedestrians crossing when the amber light shows – drivers can move on.

Some pedestrian crossings have a central island in the middle. If the crossing goes straight across the road you need to treat it as one crossing, whereas if it is staggered (with two separate sets of buttons for pedestrians) you can treat it as two crossings.

Puffin Crossing

Puffin crossings are more intelligent than pelican crossings. They have sensors on top of the lights and in the pavement so they know when a person has finished crossing. In this way, the lights will only stay red as long as it takes for the person to cross and will go back to green once that person is across (and there is no one else wanting to cross). This can help to keep traffic moving during busy times, it also has the benefit of giving pedestrians as long as they need to cross without being rushed by a timer.

Toucan Crossing

Designed for cyclists, toucan crossings enable cyclists to cross without having to get off their bike (whereas normally they should dismount). Toucan crossings have a green and red bike alongside the red and green man lights.

Equestrian (Pegasus) Crossing

As the name suggests, equestrian crossings are designed for horse riders. They allow a rider to stay on their horse as the button to request to cross is higher than normal.

DID YOU KNOW?

The first person to pass the UK driving test was a Mr R Beere, in 1935. He paid seven shillings and sixpence (the equivalent of 37½ pence today). The cost now for a practical car test is £62 and £23 for the theory test. The cost of a driving lesson is roughly £65.

ROLLOUT OF SMART MOTORWAY SAFETY TECH BROUGHT FORWARD

A measure aimed at boosting smart motorway safety will be completed ahead of schedule, Transport Secretary Grant Shapps has announced.

The Cabinet minister told MPs that radar technology to detect drivers who break down in live lanes will be rolled out across the entire network by the end of next year.



A deadline of March 2023 was included in an action plan launched by Mr Shapps in March 2020.

Highways England figures show the Stopped Vehicle Detection (SVD) upgrade has so far only been installed on three sections, totalling 37 miles out of the 500-mile smart motorway network.

Mr Shapps told the Commons' Transport Select Committee that the work will be sped up after he "put pressure on" Highways England.

Smart motorway safety was back in the spotlight last month when a coroner concluded the roads "present an ongoing risk of future deaths".

Sheffield coroner David Urpeth said the primary cause of death of Jason Mercer, 44, and Alexandru Murgeanu, 22, on the M1 in South Yorkshire in June 2019 was the careless driving of lorry driver Prezemyslaw Szuba, who ploughed into their vehicles as they stood stationary in lane one following a minor shunt.

But, recording a conclusion of unlawful killing, Mr Urpeth said: "I find, as a finding of fact, it is clear a lack of hard shoulder contributed to this tragedy."

Mr Shapps told the committee he "inherited" smart motorways when he became Transport Secretary in July 2019, and pledged to get "get rid of confusions".

These include "insane" dynamic hard shoulders, which switch between being used for emergencies and live traffic depending on demand.

The Cabinet minister said hard shoulders cannot be added to all smart motorways as that would require "the equivalent land of 700 Wembley Stadium football pitches".

Instead, he committed to "making sure that the motorways we have in this country are safer than the motorways that came before them".

He added: "I want all of our motorways to be a lot better, a lot safer."

SVD technology is designed to detect a stopped vehicle in a live lane in around 20 seconds through radar units monitoring motorway traffic in both directions.

An alert is sent to a control room operator who can view the incident on a camera, activate lane closure signs on gantries and dispatch personnel.

RAC head of roads policy Nicholas Lyes said it was "good news" that the installation will be finished ahead of schedule.

But he warned that the system "depends on other drivers seeing and obeying red 'X' closed-lane signs".

He went on: "If drivers don't see these because gantries or verge-mounted signs are too far apart, then there's still a risk of collision with a stationary vehicle."

MOTORIST CAUGHT DRIVING WITH 'UNBELIEVABLE' SNOW-COVERED WINDSCREEN

A man has been charged with dangerous driving after being caught with what police "could not believe" was only a miniscule gap scraped out of their snow-covered windscreen. The car's roof and windscreens front and back were almost entirely engulfed in a thick coating of snow, with only its side windows visible when it was pulled over by officers in Dundee.



In what was labelled "about the most extreme example of lack of preparation" the force had ever seen, the only sign of an attempt to clear the snow was a small circle on the right-hand side of the front windscreen.

Inspector Greg Burns said it was "miraculous" that no one came to harm as a result.

He said: "Our officers genuinely could not believe what they were seeing when they saw his car today. This man has put himself and other road users and pedestrians at huge risk by driving the car in this condition."

Tayside Police later on Twitter posted images of the vehicle – described by police as having "practically zero-visibility" – as they pleaded with the public to show more common sense, and ensure their windows are properly cleared before driving.

AI CAMERAS CATCH LITTERBUG DRIVERS

Video cameras equipped with artificial intelligence will be used in a pioneering scheme to catch and fine motorists throwing rubbish out of the window.



From April, council officials in Maidstone, Kent, will employ Littercam technology to target offending drivers in the first project of its kind in the country. Fines begin at £90 and rise to £120 if unpaid after 15 days. The maximum on-the-spot penalty for littering in England is £150.

Littercam can detect rubbish being tossed from vehicles and transmits footage plus photographic evidence of the offender's number plate for a human to check. Then a request is made to the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency for details of the cars registered keeper so a penalty can be sent through the post. Maidstone council has been relying on wardens to catch drivers littering the roads and issued 200 fines last year. Littercam, which has been welcomed by campaign group Keep Britain tidy, could see that soar to the thousands.

Anyone wanting to see the evidence can check the footage via the system's portal.

Highways England said around 200,000 sacks of rubbish are taken from England's high streets, minor roads and motorways in a year.

Few offenders were caught as it had to be proven who had thrown the rubbish, but a recent law change makes the car owner responsible for any litter dropped from their vehicle.

Ack Daily Mail 01/03/21

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