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EDITORIAL

Well, It will soon be “that” time of the year again! Crowds shopping for presents and booking holidays/winter breaks 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.

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

Finally, I have been asked by Philip Grohmann, our Treasurer, to remind you that your SE Group annual subscription of £10.00 is due on 1st January (this is separate to your IAM RoadSmart subscription) and if you wish to renew your membership to the Group on line (BACS), the Group’s bank details are as follows:

Barclays Bank plc, Bexleyheath
Sort Code: 20-06-72
a/c SE Group of Advanced Motorists
a/c no. 40535273
Reference: Your IAM number

If you wish to pay by cheque please send it to Phil. His address is 42 Lancing Road, Orpington, Kent, BR6 0QT

Stay safe and enjoy your driving.

TREAT YOUR BATTERY TO A TOP-UP

Winter weather means that your car’s entire electrical system is under much more strain than usual, a consequence of which is that a typical 12 volt battery may not be recharged to its full capacity.

This causes a problem, because lead acid car batteries deteriorate faster, if they are not kept fully-charged. This weakens them so much that they can fail to start your car’s engine. Should this stage be reached, it is pointless trying to charge it any more. To discover the difference between battery charge and health, this blog explains more.

While the car’s charging system will keep the battery maintained, it tends not to be able to supply a slow, gradual charge that replenishes the battery completely, One main reason for this is that most drivers do not drive for at least eight hours without stopping the engine.

Therefore, periodic conditioning of the battery with a smart charger is a wise idea to not only prolong battery life and its reliability.

COPY DATE FOR FEBRUARY SEGMENT IS
3rd JANUARY 2022

MOST DRIVERS WANT HARD SHOULDER BACK ON SMART MOTORWAYS, POLL FINDS

The RAC has called on the government to consider reinstating hard shoulders on motorways where they have been scrapped to allow greater traffic flow after a poll found that two thirds of people want to see their return.

Allowing cars to drive through the stopping lane of some sections of motorway has been controversial

since the creation of smart motorways more than a decade ago, which allow this in an effort to avoid traffic jams.

Although National Highways say that smart motorways, or all lane running (ALR) motorways, are at least as safe as traditional motorways, fatal crashes have occurred as a result of cars ploughing into stationary vehicles left without a hard shoulder.

In the years 2015 to 2019, 53 people are thought to have died on smart motorways, with at least four coroners citing the lack of hard shoulder playing a significant part in the road deaths they were investigating.

The RAC poll found that 62 per cent of people would like to see hard shoulders reinstated on smart motorways, while a similar proportion of people said that they do not believe measures such as variable speed limits adequately compensate for their loss.

Fewer than a quarter (24%) said that they support the continuation of the government's current policy on the matter, which is to continue the use of smart motorways while increasing the number of emergency refuge areas and improving technology that helps spot stationary vehicles and motorists ignoring closed lane signs.

"Our research reveals the enormous strength of feeling among drivers of all ages about the safety of all lane running smart motorways," RAC head of roads policy Nicholas Lyes said.

"It seems the only thing that will truly satisfy most drivers is the reinstatement of the hard shoulder.

"The government is therefore faced with a difficult choice between continuing to roll out unpopular all lane running motorways very much against drivers' wishes or reinstating the hard shoulder, effectively creating three-lane controlled motorways which would have the benefit of improved safety features but with less overall capacity."

Earlier this year, campaign group Smart Motorways Kill began gearing up to launch legal action that would effectively illegalise motorways without hard shoulders.

The group was founded by a woman whose husband was killed on a smart motorway in 2019 alongside another driver as they tried to avoid oncoming traffic.



IS IT LEGAL TO DRIVE WEARING HEADPHONES?

Distracted driving contributes to a significant number of road accidents – and wearing headphones can increase the risk.

Driving while wearing headphones is viewed as dangerous by road safety experts, due to its potential to cause a distraction.



Department for Transport figures reveal distracted driving accounts for 15 percent of all road traffic collisions. More worryingly, distractions led to 26 percent of deaths on the road.

Despite the rise in the use of smartphones for music and navigation functions, however, no specific law bans the use of headphones while driving in the UK.

Driven to distraction

Drivers could still be found guilty of breaking road traffic laws by driving in headphones.

Rule 148 of the Highway Code states that motorists should ‘avoid distractions when driving or riding’. Included in the list of examples for distractions is ‘loud music’.

Research undertaken by Nelson and Nilsson in 1990 found that drivers took longer to react to hazards when wearing headphones. Judging speed was also found to be affected, causing them to drive faster.

Under section 3 of the Road Traffic Act 1988, the offence of careless driving can occur where a driver is ‘avoidably distracted’.

Risk of fines and points

Careless driving can be punished by a police officer with an on-the-spot fine of £100. This is accompanied by a driving licence endorsement of three points.

More serious offences could be referred to court. This can result in a fine of up to £5,000, nine penalty points, or even a driving ban.

It means that although no specific law prevents the wearing of headphones while driving, it could still result in offences being committed.

Listening to loud music through car speakers, if enough to be distracting, could run the risk of committing the same offences.

A global perspective

Other countries around the world have acted to tackle the hazard of driving in headphones.

Research by insurance website Quotezone found that 17 US states have enacted laws to ban the wearing of headphones while driving.

In July 2015, France made it illegal for any driver, rider or cyclist to wear sound-emitting devices.

This is punishable by a €135 (£115) fine or a three-point endorsement on a driving licence. For comparison, this would be the same punishment as failing to wear a seatbelt.

TEST PASSES

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

Rosemary King

Ian Brown (1st)

DIGITAL DRIVING LICENCES TO BE INTRODUCED IN BID TO MAKE TRANSPORT 'FAIRER, GREENER AND MORE EFFICIENT'

Digital driving licences will be introduced as part of post-Brexit changes to make transport "fairer, greener and more efficient", it has been announced.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said online versions of provisional licences will be made available.

The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) is aiming to develop an app featuring the licences, required by those learning to drive, by 2024.

Physical plastic cards would still be available.

It is understood that if the digital rollout proves to be a success then full driving licences could follow suit.

A Department for Transport (DfT) source said ministers were unable to develop digital licences before Brexit because of EU law.

Mr Shapps said his department is also "bringing MOTs into the modern age" by introducing digital versions of booking systems and certificates.

"This is a golden chance to shake off the bureaucracy, invest in our future, and realise our potential with world-leading transport that benefits all of Britain," the transport secretary added.

Steve Gooding, director of motoring research charity the RAC Foundation, said: "These days the one thing drivers are most likely to have with them is their phone, so using it to carry their driver's licence could be quite handy.

"The risk is that the more personal data we store on our phones the more tempting a target they become for thieves and hackers."

The DVLA's strategic plan for 2021-24 states: "We will introduce a digital driving licence for provisional drivers and also start to build a customer account facility.

"This will ultimately give our customers personalised, easy and secure access to a range of services and allow them more choice in how they transact with us.

"Our services will be secure, scalable and resilient and we will continue to explore and expand the use of emerging technologies."

OBITUARY

It is with great sadness that I have to advise you that Joy Vinnels has passed away.

Joy was a popular member of the group for many years and with her husband Peter served teas and coffees at our regular Group Night meetings.

She was also a member of the WI and was involved with flower arranging at her local church.



WHAT IS THE SENSOR ON MY CAR'S WINDSCREEN FOR?

Modern cars are loaded with new and clever technology designed to make life easier and safer for drivers.

Many of a car's sensors are mounted behind the windscreen, between the rear-view mirror and the glass. This gives them the perfect vantage point to keep an eye on the road and the conditions outside.



If you ever wondered what all those sensors are doing, let us explain...

An enlightening lesson

They may seem like recent ideas, but sensors that react to weather or lighting conditions are not new.

General Motors pioneered automatically dipping main beam headlights as far back as 1952. The ominously named Autronic Eye sensor was made available for Oldsmobile and Cadillac models as an option.

Buick continued the GM innovations, later introducing the Twilight Sentinel. This could detect darkness, then automatically turn on the exterior lights.

Rain sensors are not a contemporary innovation either. Cadillac created a version of the luxurious 1958 Eldorado convertible that was able to sense rain and close its roof automatically.

Lights, Camera, Action

Although there are variations between individual manufacturers, the sensor setups used in most modern cars have a similar design.

For example, Skoda uses a sensor package officially known as the RLFS, which comes from the German wording Regen-Licht-Feuchte-Sonne.

This translates into English as 'Rain-Light-Moisture-Sun', giving a clue as to what the most common sensor modules can do.

Sensing the rain

One of the most useful features offered by an RLFS module is the control of rain-sensing automatic windscreen wipers.

To do this, the sensors measure the amount of moisture on the windscreen. Too many raindrops results in a signal being sent to the wipers to start.

All the driver needs to do is leave the control stalk in the 'Auto' position, and adjust the level of sensitivity to rainfall that the sensor allows.

All about the humidity

Another important part of the RLFS package is the ability to monitor the level of humidity inside the car.

It does this along by monitoring the level of sunlight and the interior temperature of the car, to let the climate control system function as efficiently as possible.

The latest sensors can even tell which side of the car sunlight is strongest on, and adjust the level of cooling between left and right sides of the cabin.

continued

Lighting up the dark

From their origins in the 1950s, light sensors have progressed to become standard equipment in many modern cars.

Monitoring the level of daylight, and turning the headlights on when it gets dark, can have a major effect on road safety. The latest RLFS sensors can differentiate between entering a tunnel and simply driving along a tree-lined road, when deciding whether to turn on the headlights.

Emulating the Autronic Eye created by General Motors, such sensors can also control main-beam headlights. Cameras can spot oncoming traffic, then automatically dip the headlights to avoid dazzling others.

What else is found behind the rear-view mirror?

The pace of innovation means manufacturers are incorporating more technology into the prime real estate behind the interior mirror.

Forward-facing cameras are now frequently added to complement sensor packages, extending the range of functions. This includes using a camera to read road signs as you pass.

This can be used to update a speed limit setting for the cruise control, or create a warning for pedestrian crossings.

Keeping an eye on safety

On certain cars, cameras are used to scan for potential collision hazards, and take action accordingly. This includes autonomous emergency braking systems, like the 'stereo' camera setup used by Jaguar Land Rover.

Subaru introduced a camera-based adaptive cruise control system in 1999. The company now incorporates emergency braking functionality as part of its EyeSight range.

Mercedes-Benz also offers a camera technology to scan the road ahead for bumps and dips. On the GLE SUV it can preemptively adjust the air suspension to reduce body movement as much as possible.

What if my windscreen needs replacing?

Having so much complex technology crammed behind the windscreen means extra care needs to be taken should the glass need replacing.

Before replacing or refitting a windscreen, companies should ask whether the car has any special sensors installed.

A layer of gel separates the sensor components from the actual glass, and needs to be replaced with the windscreen.

More importantly, cars with features such as automatic braking need to have the sensors and cameras recalibrated after the new glass is fitted. This ensures they operate as intended, keeping drivers and others safe.

FLIGHT OF FANCY

A young lady walks into a supermarket and on her way round she sees the chap that had his wicked way with her the previous evening after they had met at a club. He was stacking boxes of washing powder on the shelves.

"You lying whatsit" she shouted. "Last night you told me that you were a stunt pilot!"

"No" he said, "I told you that I was a member of the Ariel display team."

WINTER TYRES, OR ALL-SEASON?

A stereotype of the British is that we are weather-obsessed. Perhaps this is true but, in the main, our weather is not as extreme as that of other nations. This is reflected in our tyre buying habits. Over 90% of UK tyre sales are of the 'summer' variety, for example. Additionally, unlike certain countries in continental Europe, there is no legal requirement to change to cold weather tyres in the winter months.

Yet, whenever the UK receives even a light dusting of snow, 'winter tyres' tends to be a topic that features in at least one motoring periodical. Obviously, they have their benefits in snow and slush especially but their primary advantage is superior grip at temperatures below a notional seven degrees Celsius. 'Cold Weather' tyres is, therefore, a more appropriate description.

Even so, cold weather tyres accounted for only 1% of the UK tyre market during 2019. Perhaps we should not be surprised, after the majority of the country has not experienced extreme cold conditions for at least several years. While summer tyres offer less grip in colder conditions (from a theoretical seven degrees Celsius and below), cold weather covers are compromised in warmer weathers.

All Season – the ideal compromise?

Realising that cold weather tyres are suitable only for extremes in British weather, many drivers are turning to all-season tyres not only as a compromise but also a more convenient alternative to swapping and storing two sets of tyres annually. As manufacturers and tyre importers are responding to the demand, the sales of these all-season covers rose to 6% last year.

As their name suggests, all-season tyres offer a go-between between the two alternatives. Their rubber compounds tend to be softer than those of summer tyres but harder than winter tyres. They boast less rolling resistance and, theoretically, fuel consumption benefits, over cold-weather tyres, too. While their abilities remain compromised, compared to tyres designed solely for the summer and winter seasons, British motorists are finding them to be an ideal compromise, when faced with our typically inclement weather.

SCREEN-WASH: YOUR PROTECTION AGAINST LEGIONNAIRES' DISEASE

The pandemic and the resultant lock-down has seen many cars standing idle for long periods, or being used merely for short trips until very recently.

Even if you have used your car less so far this year, this does not mean that you can skip maintenance. In many cases, more frequent attention is needed.

One of the areas that you can address easily is the screen-wash. While driving with an empty windscreen washer bottle is illegal, many drivers tend not to use an additive during the summer months to save money.

Unfortunately, tap water within the plastic bottle can go stagnant, especially when kept warm for long periods. Bacterial growth establishes itself, the spores from which can enter the car's interior through the ventilation system. This includes those that are responsible for Legionnaires' disease, a lung infection that could be fatal in itself, let alone enhancing the risk of death, should COVID-19 be contracted.

ARE MOTORWAYS READY FOR HANDS-FREE DRIVING? AUTOMATED TECH COULD TAKE CONTROL BY SUMMER

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps has announced plans to make Britain the world's first country to let motorway drivers take their hands off the wheel.

The Department for Transport (DfT) suggested that Automatic Lane Keeping Systems (ALKS) could steer vehicles in stop-start traffic of up to 37 mph.



Use of ALKS – which has been approved by United Nations regulations that came into force in Britain on Friday – is confined to roads where traffic moving in opposite directions is physically separated and no pedestrians or cyclists are allowed.

The decision follows a call for evidence in August on how automated technology could make driving “safer, smoother and easier for motorists”.

New Teslas and a Mercedes S-class due to arrive this year are expected to be among the first eligible vehicles capable of safely driving themselves, as government legislation put it, “in at least some circumstances or situations”*.

Motorists could soon be using their phones, watching films on tablets, or even reading books behind the wheel, in accordance with The Automated and Electric Vehicles Act 2018.

Car safety expert Thatcham Research has voiced its concerns about ALKS technology, which it points out is unable to make a vehicle change lanes to avoid trouble, instead simply slowing them to a halt.

Although entertainment systems turn off in the event of an accident, distracted drivers may also struggle to react in time to hazards on the road.

While Mr Shapps has made it clear that he wants Britain to be the first country to benefit from ALKS, some insurance professionals are calling for tighter regulations.

Rather than objecting to drivers using the technology they believe a human should be in charge at all times until the arrival of fully autonomous vehicles.

Lilian Greenwood, a Labour member of the transport select committee, argues that ALKS isn't up to the task: “It simply isn't safe for drivers to ignore the road and do other things while the technology is unable to respond safely to the unexpected.”

The DfT said: “We have sought views on the use of the automated lane-keeping system to pave the way towards introducing it safely on UK roads. No decision has yet been made on whether to allow ALKS to operate up to 70mph.”

The “dangerous misconception” of a truly self-driving car spurred Thatcham research to devise a first-of-its-kind Assisted Driver Grading system.

Partnering with Euro NCAP, the safety specialist hopes to better equip motorists to understand assisted driving features on modern cars.

HOW AND WHEN TO USE YOUR HAZARD WARNING LIGHTS

Hazard warning lights must be present and working for your car to pass its MOT. But how and when should you use them?

By law, hazard warning lights must be fitted to cars built after 1 April 1986. They are tested as part of the annual MOT test and the car will fail if they are missing or don't work.

As the MOT inspection manual states: 'Hazard warning lamps must operate using only one switch and with the engine or ignition switch in both the on and off positions'.

Vehicles first used before 1 April 1986 do not need to have hazard warning lights. They are also not required on vehicles that:

Do not have front and rear position lamps (lights)

Have front and rear position lamps that are permanently disconnected, painted over or masked

Were first used before 1 January 1936

Tricycles and quadricycles classed as mopeds do not need hazard warning lights. Only 'bodied' mopeds must have direction indicators.

What are hazard warning lights for?

The Highway Code states that hazard warning lights 'may be used when your vehicle is stationary, to warn that it is temporarily obstructing traffic. Never use them as an excuse for dangerous or illegal parking.

To quote from the guide: 'You MUST NOT use hazard warning lights while driving or being towed unless you are on a motorway or unrestricted dual carriageway and you need to warn drivers behind you of a hazard or obstruction ahead. Only use them for long enough to ensure that your warning has been observed.'

Examples include stationary traffic on a motorway. If you find yourself at the back of a queue, with fast-moving vehicles approaching from behind, the hazard warning lights might provide an early warning for other drivers.

Similarly, they can be useful on a bend or brow of a hill where visibility is reduced. Turn them off when your presence has been observed.

Is it illegal to drive with hazard lights switched on?

While there's no set penalty or fine for driving with your hazard lights on, you could be charged with careless driving if it leads to an accident. This could result in a fine of £100 and three points on your driving licence.

Careless driving (driving without due care and attention) carries a maximum penalty of disqualification or nine points, plus a fine of up to £2,500. However, it's highly unlikely that a hazard warning light offence would result in severe punishment.

The problem is that fellow motorists will be unable to see your turn signals if the hazard warning lights are in use.



Continued

How do I turn hazard lights on?

The hazard light warning switch is likely to be a white triangle on a red background or a red triangle on a black background. Common places for the switch include the top of the dashboard near the air vents, on the centre console between the front seats, or behind the steering wheel.

The switch and green indicator warning lights will flash when they are in use, and you'll also hear the familiar ticking sound of the turn signals.

What the experts say

Neil Greig, IAM RoadSmart director of policy and research, told The Sun: "According to Rule 116 in the Highway Code, hazard warning lights may be used when your vehicle is stationary, to warn that it is temporarily obstructing traffic.

"It is a grey area because you can use them when moving to alert other traffic to a hazard ahead and they don't define 'only use them long enough to ensure that your warning has been observed', so our advice would be to use them sensibly and for the police to be as flexible as possible in enforcing the regulations.

"Hazard warning lights should not be used when they could cause confusion. If you are driving very slowly due to a car problem and are about to stop, ensure you switch them off if you are carrying out a manoeuvre, such as turning left or right.

"It would be ironic if your use of hazard warning lights became the cause of a collision. If you were fined, it would most likely be £100, plus three points fixed penalty, for careless driving."

CHECK YOUR SCREEN-WASH STRENGTH

As winter is now firmly upon us, GEM Motoring Assist is advising that drivers not only check their screen-wash levels but also the fluid concentration. Frozen screen-wash not only will stop you from clearing your windscreen but it can also damage the system's pump and jets.

Anti-freezing properties

The chief property of most screen-washes is to reduce the temperature at which the liquid freezes. The most expensive option is to buy pre-mixed screen-wash, which you simply pour-into the reservoir. The cheapest screen-washes tend to smell pretty vile and protect to only a few degrees below zero, even when used neat. Be aware that the anti-freezing properties of any screen-wash fluid will be reduced, should you add it to a reservoir that contains a quantity of water already. Most screen wash solutions require diluting with water, or can be used neat for maximum anti-freezing protection. Therefore, follow the dilution instructions carefully, which tend to differ between manufacturers.

Yet, there are other issues, too. Cheap screen-washes can damage plastic headlamp covers, so ensure that you buy decent quality solution from a reputable supplier. Consider also that some screen-wash types do not mix together very well and can create a gloop that blocks the fine filters that are used on some models. Using your screen-wash facility until the water runs out is the easiest DIY way of emptying most of the system, without either dismantling, or sucking out the old fluid. Finally, never use anti-freeze that is designed for engine cooling systems. Not only is it not very effective at clearing glass but it also damages paintwork.



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

14th December 2021
Christmas Quiz
(with buffet)

CANCELLED

8th March 2022
59th AGM
(with Guest Speaker to be advised)

14th June 2022
(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 next year (please see our website for further details).

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 £60 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!

IS 20 REALLY PLENTY? IT'S BEEN GIVEN AN AMBER LIGHT BY IAM ROADSMART FOLLOWERS

IAM RoadSmart's recent research which discovered that almost half of drivers are now in favour of reducing the speed limits on all urban roads from 30mph to 20mph has been given the amber light on social media, with mixed reception from followers.



The survey of 1,000 motorists looked

to gauge public opinion on normalising a speed limit of 20mph on all residential streets, in the hope of making cities, towns and villages around the country better places to be.

The campaign has already gained significant traction in Wales, with the First Minister, Mark Drakeford putting the wheels in motion for a blanket 20mph speed limit to be implemented in 2023. This could result in mounting pressure on legislators across the border to follow suit, but some followers on the IAM RoadSmart Facebook page were keen to put the brakes on the idea, citing other issues such as enforcement, education, congestion, and location.

Here are some of the highlights from the comments section:

- ◆ Enforcement - "You can reduce it to whatever you want. Enforcement is lacking and so it's irrelevant really."
- ◆ Regulation - "The biggest problem with road safety today is regulation. A posted speed limit sign will not improve road safety if no one is there to enforce it. Self-entitled drivers will continue to dispense their own interpretation of the limit. Most will exceed the more usual 30 mph."
- ◆ Education - "More driver education. The standard of driving these days is abysmal. Educate drivers about lane discipline and about dangers of using mobile phones at the wheel. Bring in mandatory tests every 10 years. And something similar to cpc which lorry & bus drivers have to do. Speed isn't a killer. Inappropriate speed is."
- ◆ Common Sense - "No, but 20 mph is fine on a housing estate, don't need telling though as most people use their common sense when they see kids and animals around."
- ◆ Designated Areas - "Outside all schools, or where the road is narrow, or twisty with poor sightlines, yes. Otherwise, no. A better investment would be average speed cameras."
- ◆ Training - "Speed has been reduced historically as a safety solution but, drivers need more training particularly on road sense."
- ◆ Other Road Users - "How about educating pedestrians? We could teach kids how and where to cross the road. Teach road safety. A potential working title could be "The Green Cross Code! Just a thought!"
- ◆ Congestion - "I have no objection to 20mph zones within housing developments, I live in one. What concerns me is the false sense of invincibility they appear to bestow on far too many drivers."

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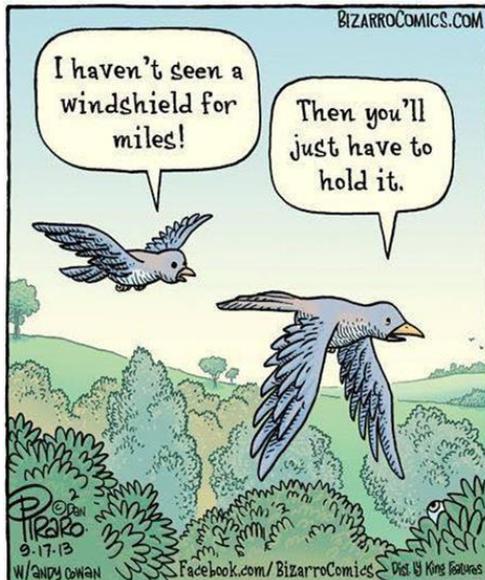
- ◆ Environment – “Every route should be risk assessed, and a suitable speed determined. But it is a much wider issue now - not just casualty reduction, but environmental and quality of life impact has to be in the mix. 20 led communities are just more pleasant places to be.”
- ◆ COVID Effects – The new normal “People working from home, more online shopping, major stores closing, money transfers, contactless payments, fuel prices, deliveries, smart homes, fibre broadband, electric cars. Soon we may never have to leave our homes...The bigger picture, to help save the planet, maybe.”

Director of Policy & Research at IAM RoadSmart mirrors the pragmatic stance of IAM RoadSmart followers, stating that: “Improving road safety is key but a blanket ban on reducing 30mph speed limits to 20mph speed limits isn’t the best route forward.

“Each situation needs to be decided on a case-by-case basis, with local considerations, consultation and investment in environmental improvements playing an important role.”

“Our followers have raised some very valid comments, and it was a hotly debated topic with just under 27,000 views (26,995), 540 comments and over 5,000 people engaging by sharing or expressing views.”

“We can immediately address concerns on environment, education and training. We at IAM RoadSmart are fully behind training and education to avoid lack of knowledge of fines or the requirement for further enforcement. Not everyone interprets the rules the same which is why we need education and safety engineering precautions. The one-size fits all approach isn’t the best option as our followers have said, and we are recommending a review of high-risk areas. We continue to campaign for improved infrastructure designed to slow traffic and emphasise shared spaces.”



LESS THAN HALF OF DRIVERS KNOW EYESIGHT RULES

New DVLA research has found less than half of drivers know they must be capable of reading a car number plate from 20 metres away.

The majority of motorists are unaware of the correct legal eyesight requirement to drive safely.

Research by the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) found less than half (45.8 percent) of those asked knew they must be able to read a car number plate from 20 metres away.

As part of National Eye Health Week, the DVLA will launch a campaign to remind drivers to check their eyesight.

Going the distance

The DVLA surveyed 1,623 drivers earlier this year about eyesight standards.

A total of 744 were aware of the need to be able to read a number plate from the 20-metre distance. Almost a fifth (19.8 percent) believed this distance was 15 metres, while 28 percent thought it was 25 metres.

Most concerning were the six percent of drivers asked who could not specify any distance at all.

For the avoidance of doubt, drivers must be able to read a number plate from 20 metres. Where a driver needs glasses or contact lenses, these must be worn for every journey.

A reminder to test yourself

The DVLA will aim to improve awareness of eyesight standards throughout National Eye Health Week.

Lynette Rose, director of strategy, policy and communications at DVLA said: "The number plate test is a simple and effective way for motorists to check their eyesight meets the required standard for driving, which includes reading a number plate clearly from 20 metres.

"Anyone can do the test at any time. Twenty metres is typically around the length of five cars parked next to each other – you can test yourself on whether you can clearly read the number plate of the furthest car."

FAST FOOD SUGAR RUSH LINKED TO CAR CRASH RISK

Drivers who eat fast food increase the risk of crashing their cars, a study suggests.

Snacks high in sugar and fat were found to be associated with driving at higher speeds and reduced concentration levels behind the wheel.

The study of 817 Estonians by researchers at Tartu University looked at behaviours behind "risky driving". Participants completed a series of questionnaires to measure impulsivity and aggression.

Blood samples were also taken for genetic analysis.

Higher accident and driving conviction rates were identified among those with poor diets.

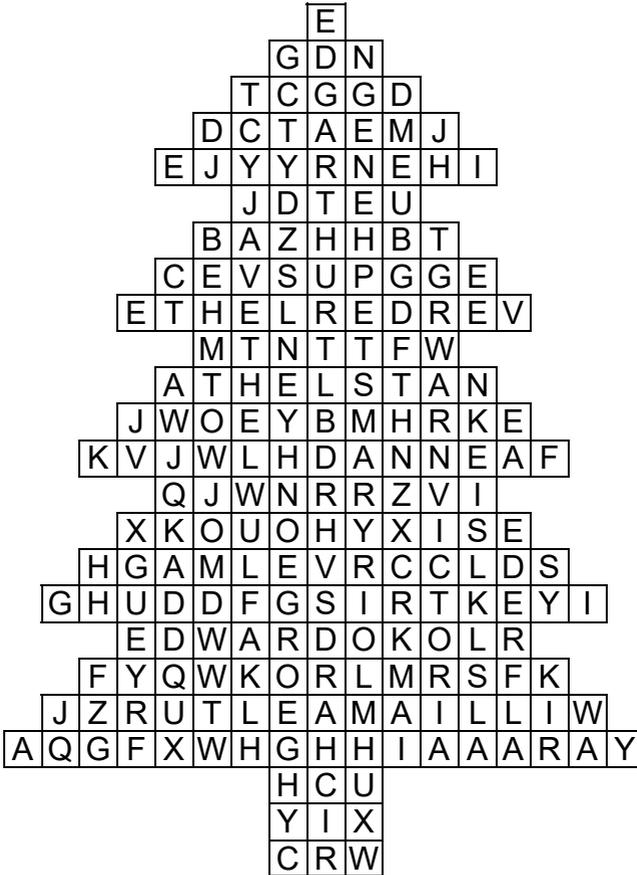
An estimated £1.25billion is spent on food at service stations each year, with sweets the most popular choice for hungry motorists.



WORD SEARCH ~ KINGS AND QUEENS OF ENGLAND

Hidden in the grid below are the names of 24 different Kings and Queens of England.

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



ALFRED	EADRED	ETHELRED	JOHN
ANNE	EDGAR	ETHELWULF	MARY
ARTHUR	EDMUND	GEORGE	RICHARD
ATHELSTAN	EDWARD	HAROLD	STEPHEN
CANUTE	EGBERT	HENRY	VICTORIA
CHARLES	ELIZABETH	JAMES	WILLIAM

WHAT IS HYDROGEN POWER AND HOW DOES IT WORK?

Though it's clear to see that a lot of weight is being thrown behind battery-electric cars, hydrogen-electric power is seen by many as a real solution to many mobility problems. Just as clean as a regular electric car but somewhat quicker to 'fill', hydrogen could prove to be the ideal fuel for the future.

And though there are only two hydrogen-powered cars currently on sale in the UK – the Toyota Mirai and Hyundai's Nexo – the fuel is rapidly gaining traction, with Hyundai recently pledging even more support for the fuel, particularly in the future of commercial vehicles. Let's take a look at what else you need to know about hydrogen power.

So how does it actually work?

Though it can feel like hydrogen power and conventional battery-electric cars are like chalk and cheese, the reality is that the two powertrains are quite similar. Both use an electric motor for propulsion and incorporate a battery, but in hydrogen cars, the latter is much smaller.

The reason? Well, it's hooked up to a hydrogen fuel cell and storage tank which provide the energy. Hydrogen stored within the tank is fed into the fuel cell where it is mixed with oxygen and this then keeps the battery topped up. The emissions? Just water.

So is there a long time to wait when 'filling' an electric car?

That's one of the real benefits of hydrogen. Whereas you'll spend a certain amount of time charging up an electric car – with even the very fastest chargers taking at least 25-30 minutes to take a car from five to 80 per cent – a full fill-up of hydrogen will take around the same time as a petrol or diesel car to top up.

And how many miles will you get from a fill-up?

Hydrogen-powered vehicles return a decent range on a full tank. The new second-generation Toyota Mirai, for instance, has a claimed driving range of between 300 and 400 miles.

However, a team in France recently set a new record by travelling 623 miles on a single tank of hydrogen. Set in a Toyota Mirai, it smashed the previous record by 72 miles.

Does filling up with hydrogen cost significantly more than petrol or diesel?

Not really. A full fill-up of Toyota's Mirai will cost around £60, or about the same as an average-sized petrol car.

Are there any safety concerns with hydrogen power?

Very few. In fact, during recent Euro NCAP safety tests, engineers paid particular attention to how the hydrogen-powered Toyota Mirai coped in a collision. However, they found that the hydrogen powertrain had no negative effect on the car's overall safety and gave it a full five-star rating.

Are there many hydrogen filling stations in the UK?

At present, no. Currently, there are just 11 hydrogen filling stations in the UK, with the bulk of these located around London. The only location in the north of England is in Sheffield, but between here and the southern-based stations there's a large blank area.

However, more stations are planned to alleviate this problem.

Are there more hydrogen models going on sale soon?

continued

It's true that, at present, choice is limited when it comes to hydrogen-powered cars. With just the Hyundai Nexo and Toyota Mirai on sale, it could be thought that manufacturers aren't confident in the fuel. However, that's not the case as more models are due to enter the market soon.

BMW is currently developing a hydrogen-powered version of its X5 – badged iX5 – while newcomer Genesis has also stated that it'll be bringing a hydrogen car to market.

HOW TO AVOID BUYING A CLONED CAR

Car cloning is the four-wheeled equivalent of identity theft. Criminals steal a car, then give it a new set of ID numbers. These are copied from a similar make and model already on the road.

Thieves disguise the 17-digit Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) on the cloned car and use a stolen V5 document (car log book) to legitimise its identity.

With help with vehicle history specialist HPI, here are four straightforward ways to avoid buying a cloned car.

Check the history

Always check a car's history before you buy. Look through any bills and receipts supplied, and use the government's online MOT check tool to see if the mileage tallies.

Also, make sure you view the car at the registered keeper's address, as shown on the V5. Don't be talked into meeting somebody in a petrol station or layby.

Buyers should ensure all the VIN (chassis) numbers on the vehicle match each other. An HPI history check will ensure they tally with the details recorded with the DVLA, too.

Market value

Look at classified advert listings to get a feel for your chosen car's market value. The Auto Trader website ranks cars into categories such as Good Price, Fair Price and Lower Price to give you some guidance.

If the seller is asking less than 70 percent of the market price for a vehicle, be on your guard. There is rarely such a thing as a bargain, especially if the car later turns out to be a clone.

Don't pay with cash

Don't pay with cash, particularly if the car is costing you more than £3,000. Some cloners will take a banker's draft as part-payment, because the cash part is sufficient profit without ever cashing the bankers' draft.

Most crooks selling cloned cars would rather walk away from a sale than take a payment that could be traced back to them.

Check the V5 document

Check the vehicle's V5, or log book. Stolen V5 documents are still being used to accompany cloned vehicles.

Is the vehicle advertised saying the owner has mislaid or lost the V5? Then buyer beware! This is a red light you should check very, very carefully.



HAVE YOU HEARD OF THE DUTCH REACH? THE CHANGES TO THE HIGHWAY CODE YOU NEED TO KNOW

With the government set to confirm major changes to The Highway Code, road users need to get up to speed with a range of changes to the rules of the road this autumn. The updates are the largest overhaul to the code since mid-2018, with a plethora of amendments and new rules including a hierarchy of responsibility that will affect all road users.

The Cycling and Walking Review and the recent Summer of Cycling show that government is firmly committed to promoting active travel alternatives to the car, although traffic levels are now quickly returning to normal. The focus of the review is to improve road safety for vulnerable road users such as pedestrians, cyclists, motorcyclists and horse riders in an effort to make active forms of travel easier and safer.

Among the highlights of the updated code is the inclusion of the Dutch Reach, the safety practice whereby drivers and passengers use the hand furthest from the door to exit their vehicle. This naturally turns the driver or passenger towards the window, making it easier to spot approaching cyclists.

Neil Greig, Director of Policy and Research at IAM RoadSmart, commented: "Due to blind spots, dirt, glare, or improper adjustment, mirrors alone are ineffective in attempts to put the brakes on cycling injuries and fatalities caused by drivers and passengers exiting their vehicles. The Dutch Reach is also especially important for rear passengers, who of course don't have the benefit of mirrors."

Despite this, worryingly, of 10,000 people the IAM surveyed among its members and the general public, a resounding 85% were unaware of what the Dutch Reach is. This highlights the need for all drivers, not just learners, to familiarise themselves with this new measure.

Another of the key additions to the code is the new 'hierarchy of road users', which ensures road users who have the potential to do the greatest harm have the greatest responsibility to reduce the danger they pose to others. This means road users at the top are pedestrians, cyclists, and horse riders, while towards the bottom are motorcyclists, cars, vans and heavy goods vehicles.

Neil added: "IAM RoadSmart believes all road users should take equal responsibility for their safety on the roads and that the hierarchy may encourage some to take unnecessary risks. While the existing rule states drivers should watch out for pedestrians crossing a road into which you are turning and 'if they have started to cross', they have priority, the new code makes explicit that pedestrians and cyclists have priority when travelling straight ahead at junctions."

In a further effort to protect those at the top of the hierarchy of road users, drivers must now also give way to pedestrians waiting to cross a zebra crossing, and pedestrians as well as cyclists waiting to cross a parallel crossing. Previously, drivers only had to stop once the road user had started to cross.

Neil concluded: "Recent times has brought to the public's attention the huge benefits of active travel to people's personal health and wellbeing, local communities and the environment, but people need to feel safe undertaking them.

continued

The new changes are substantial and the key to their success will be in communicating the new approach to drivers and riders who haven't read a Highway Code for years. IAM RoadSmart is working with the Department of Transport to develop clear and accessible information so that everyone gets the right message about the changes at the same time. Without this there is huge potential for more conflict on the roads rather than less."

SPEED LIMITERS TO BE FITTED ON ALL NEW CARS BY 2022

A look at how speed limiters could impact your car insurance, and how the new system isn't guaranteed to stop you getting speeding penalties.

The top speed you can legally drive on UK roads is 70 mph. So why can cars reach speeds up to 100 mph?

The European Transport Safety Council has investigated this. It says that 26,000 road deaths happen in Europe every year, and speed is one of main reasons for this figure.

As a result of this research, new speed limiting software called the Intelligent Speed Assistance system (ISA), has been developed.

The software will be mandatory for all new cars from next year, despite the UK leaving the EU.

How does the Intelligent Speed Assistance system work?

The ISA uses either a video or a GPS-linked system to detect speed signs.

The system alerts the driver if they're going over the speed limit, and if the driver doesn't slow down the ISA should intervene.

The system doesn't involve the car's braking system, though. After a series of alerts, if the driver doesn't apply the brakes, the vehicle reduces power to the engine.

The car should then naturally slow down to the new speed limit. Automatic detection of pedestrians and cyclists was also approved alongside the ISA.

Is the ISA responsible for keeping the car at the correct speed limit?

Matthew Avery, director of research at Thatcham Research warns that there are limitations to the technology when it comes to detecting speed:

"Speed signs can often be obscured or inaccurate, while GPS mapping can be out of date. Temporary limits and road works can confuse the system too.

"This could lead to speeding fines if the system isn't picking up the limit correctly. And drivers will still be liable, whether they were relying on the system or not."

The ETSC says that the technology used in ISAs has a high level of accuracy. It has the ability to detect temporary speed limits, digital signs and overhead signs.

ISAs also have an in-built function which means it can detect over-the-air updates to speed limit information.

But ultimately, the car's speed is the driver's responsibility, The ETSC says:

"ISA is a driver assistance technology: the driver, not the car, is responsible for obeying the current speed limit at all times."

If the ISA detects a lower speed limit than permitted the driver would be able to override the system.

The same applies if the ISA detects a higher speed than allowed. The driver would have to slow the car to the correct speed.

Driving assistance tools like ISAs are there to 'assist' drivers, not take full control of the vehicle. So even with the system, you're not guaranteed to escape speeding penalties.

continued

Will the Intelligent Speed Assistance system affect my car insurance?

The European Transport Safety Council believes that the technology could reduce road collisions by 30% and deaths by 20%.

If those forecasts prove accurate, then as well as making the roads safer there should be fewer car insurance claims.

Fewer claims could see premiums fall. After all, insurers base their premiums on risk. And if there's a lower risk of a claim being made, the cost of insuring your driving could be reduced

Will I need to install the Intelligent Speed Assistance system in my car?

Not yet. ETSC have told us that these systems don't need to be retrofitted, so you won't need to fork out to get one installed in your motor just yet.

Which cars have the Intelligent Speed Assistance system installed already?

Many Ford models already use the ISA system, as do Mercedes-Benz, Peugeot/Citroen and Renault cars.

Volvo has welcomed vehicle speed limiters, too. It was the first manufacturer to roll out the system across all its models. The company will cap the speed of all new cars at 112 mph.

Avery goes on to say: "Euro NCAP has tested manual speed limiters since 2009 and has long promoted their fitment to new cars. In fact, most new cars now have ISA fitted as standard. In 2018 manually-set ISA systems became a requirement as part of the five-star Euro NCAP rating for safety."

Volvo is also developing 'smart speed controls' that should detect when a car is driving near a vulnerable site, such as a school or a hospital. It's hoping to develop the technology to improve driver behaviour.

Will the UK adopt speed limiters even though we've left the EU?

The Vehicle Certification Agency will continue with EU regulations even though we're no longer part of the EU, so the speed limiting rules will apply to the UK.

Even if the rules didn't apply, it's unlikely that EU-based vehicle manufacturers would make models with different specifications just to please our market.

Is there a way to override the system?

The system has an on/off switch. The default setting for the system is on, but the speed limiter can be disabled by being switched off – at least for the time being. It's possible that the authorities might scrap the option of turning it off in the future.

If you turn it off, it should stay off until you restart the vehicle.

Even when the ISA system is on, there are some circumstances when you can override it. An example of this is if you're overtaking on a road where there's a decrease in speed limit.

After alerting you, the car should automatically start to slow down. By pushing down hard on the accelerator, you can override the system and complete the manoeuvre safely.

If you stay above the speed limit, the system should sound a warning and display a visual alert. The alerts remain on until the driver is within the speed limit.

continued

What are the benefits of the Intelligent Speed Assistance system?

Besides the life-saving potential of the technology, it's thought that car insurance premiums could be lower. Fuel efficiency and CO2 emissions might also improve as a result.

Could the new system spell an end to speeding fines, too? It's certainly possible, and it's a feature that Ford has capitalised on when promoting the ISA in its vehicles. But this also relies on the driver responding to the ISA alerts.

Avery says:

"Many drivers want to remain safe and drive within the law, however changing from one speed limit to another can be difficult and distracting. In this respect, Intelligent Speed Assistance (ISA) systems help to not only keep drivers safe but also legal."

The new automatic detection software spots walkers, cyclists and vulnerable road users.

With the new software in place, people may feel safer and be more likely to walk or cycle.

(Ed: My thanks to Simon Bibby)

GOOGLE MAPS TO FEATURE FUEL-SAVING ECO ROUTING FOR MOTORISTS

Eco-friendly routing is coming to Google Maps, allowing motorists to prioritise fuel-efficient routes over the most direct or fastest ones.

The eco-friendly route option will automatically be displayed as an alternative to the fastest one, if the default route isn't also the greenest.

Both fuel savings and the difference in estimated time of arrival (ETA) will be shown, so motorists can make a decision which route to use.

Google's new fuel-saving mapping tech has been developed using AI and insights from the US Department of Energy's National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL).

Jeff Gonder from the centre for integrated mobility sciences at NREL, said: "Not only does Google Maps' eco-friendly routing bring NREL's fuel-efficient technology from the lab to the road, but it has huge potential to significantly lower emissions and save drivers money on gas — something that's good for both people and the planet."

The company has calculated it has the potential to cut CO2 emissions by more than one million tonnes per year – the equivalent of taking 200,000 cars off the road.

It is launching now in the US on Android and iOS. Europe and the UK will follow in 2022 and for those who want to ignore the new eco-friendly routing and always see the fastest route, Google will include an override in the map's settings.

AND FINALLY...

- ◆ I've started telling everyone about the benefits of eating dried grapes. It's all about raisin awareness.
- ◆ My friends and I have named our band 'Duvet'. It's a cover band.
- ◆ Dad, are we pyromaniacs? Yes, we arson.
- ◆ It is unwise to share your secrets with a clock! Well, time will tell.

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