

Driving complacency: 74% of drivers would risk life in flood water

- With further wet weather expected, Environment Agency and the AA urge drivers to stay away from flood water this winter.
- Watery Gate Lane in Leicester revealed as the top flood rescue hotspot in the country, with locations in Nottinghamshire, Essex and London also making the top 10.
- Just 1 in 4 drivers (24%) would find another route to avoid driving through flood water, despite the risk to life.
- Women and young drivers more likely to turn around and find another route.

Three quarters of drivers (74%) would risk driving through flood water, despite it being the leading cause of death during a flood[1]. This is according to latest research highlighted by the Environment Agency and the AA as they join forces to urge drivers to keep themselves and their passengers safe from the potentially devastating risks of flood water.

Driving through flood water is the number one cause of death during flooding, however the research shows motorists are still willing to take the risk. Just 30cm of moving water is enough to float a car, and by driving through flood water, drivers open themselves up to the risk of being swept away and having to be rescued or getting stranded after their car engine takes in water and stops. During recent flooding in November, three people were rescued from the roof of a car in Devon after getting trapped in fast flowing flood water which reached the windows of their car[2], and a woman in Doncaster was rescued by the fire service from a submerged car[3]. By opting to re-route their journey to avoid flood-affected areas, drivers can avoid risking their own or someone else's life as well as damage to their vehicle.

Alarmingly, nearly 1 in 4 (23%) of drivers said they are most likely to gauge whether they can drive through flood water on the visibility of the kerbs, whilst 12% would wait and see if someone else braves the flood water first and then follow them.

The survey carried out by the AA also found that: * Women are 32% more likely to turn around and go the other way when faced with a submerged road than men (22% of men said they would, compared to 29% of women). * Women are 50% more likely to let someone else go through the water first, with 15% saying they would wait and see if anyone else drives through and follow them compared to 10% of men. * Despite Leicester being the top place for flood related breakdowns in England, those in the East Midlands are the most likely to turn back if the road was flooded with one in three (30%) saying they would, compared to 21% of those in the South East. * Young drivers (18-24 year olds) are more sensible than older drivers, as 27% would turn back at floodwater, as opposed to 24% of those aged 45+

Caroline Douglass Director, Incident Management and Resilience, Environment

Agency said: "It is concerning that so many drivers are willing to risk their own life and the lives of others by driving through flood water.

"Our message is clear – surface water flooding it is often deeper than it looks and just 30cm of flowing water is enough to float your car. Never drive through flood water. Turn around and find another route."

Ben Sheridan, AA Patrol of the Year, said, "Don't chance it if the road ahead is flooded – flood water can be deceptively deep and can hide other hazards in the road which can leave you stranded.

"Trying to drive through flood water puts you and your passengers at risk, but it can also cause damage to your car. It only takes an egg-cupful of water to wreck your engine and on many cars, the engine's air intake is low down at the front."

The AA has released the top ten places for breakdowns due to flood water between 2014 and 2018:

- Watery Gate Lane, Leicester, Leicestershire 88
- Rufford Lane, Newark, Nottinghamshire 71
- Houndsfield Lane, Hollywood, Birmingham, Worcestershire 49
- Furnace Grange Road, Trescott, Wolverhampton 37
- Riverside, Eynsford, Dartford, Kent 35
- Buttsbury, Ingatestone, Essex 32
- Green Road, Birmingham, Worcestershire 30
- Tanners Lane, Winterbourne Earls, Salisbury, Wiltshire 28
- Riverside / The Embankment, Twickenham, London 28
- Hawkswood Lane, Gerrards Cross, Buckinghamshire 27