

Footage shows lorry driver with a mobile phone to each ear on motorway ahead of South West road safety initiative

Startling footage, captured on the M4 earlier this year, shows an [HGV driver holding two mobile phones, one to each ear](#).

But what he didn't realise was the vehicle travelling alongside was an unmarked National Highways 'HGV cab' – and there were two police officers inside.

The footage, taken between junctions 18 and 17 by Avon and Somerset Police, captures one of over 21,000 offences recorded by officers in the Operation Tramline HGV cabs since the national safety initiative was launched by National Highways, formerly Highways England.

The National Highways HGV cabs are now being used as part of a multi-agency fortnight of action along the M4 and M5, taking place from Monday 13 September to Sunday 26 September, which aims to reduce the number of incidents on the motorways and highlight the risks of dangerous driving.

Elsewhere in the South West, a truck driver who initially provided false details to Devon and Cornwall Police during an operation last month was later identified as disqualified and arrested, while Wiltshire Police caught a motorist speeding at 121mph along the M4 during a four-day operation earlier this year.

Devon and Cornwall Police's July operation recorded:

- 7 people driving without a seat belt
- 15 driving while using a mobile phone at the wheel
- 2 positive cases of drug driving
- 66 offences in total, including 10 speeding and 4 with no insurance.

In just four days, the Wiltshire force dealt with drivers for the following offences:

- 19 driving without a seat belt
- 8 driving while using a mobile phone at the wheel
- 1 arrest for possession of Class B drugs
- 6 Traffic Offence Reports for speeding, with 121mph being the fastest

A Gloucestershire Police operation in May saw:

- 44 driving without a seat belt
- 19 driving while using a mobile phone at the wheel
- 8 Traffic Offence Reports for speeding

- 8 other misdemeanours, including two insecure loads and one of driving with no insurance

Avon and Somerset Police, meanwhile, have utilised the HGV cab over four weeks this year, and recorded the following offences in that time:

- 186 driving without a seat belt
- 26 driving while using a mobile phone at the wheel
- 17 Traffic Offence Reports for speeding
- 129 other offences, including insecure loads and driving without due care and attention

Under the banner of Operation Peninsula, the campaign will be operating along the M4 between junctions 14 and 18, and the M5 from junction 8 to junction 31.

National Highways deals with countless incidents on the M5 and M4 motorways, and in the latest figures, the company attended a large number of traffic collisions – 526 on the M4 and 821 on the M5 in 2019. Since the launch of Operation Tramline in 2015, more than 21,600 offences have been recorded on the National Highways motorway network. The most common offences have included:

- using a mobile phone – 6,073
- not wearing a seatbelt – 6,253
- not in proper control of vehicle – 1,501
- speeding – 1,199

In total, 19,564 vehicles have been stopped in Operation Tramline between July 2015 and April 2021. In that time, a number of bizarre and dangerous behaviours have been spotted:

- a driver steering a lorry with his knees while eating lunch on his lap and using a phone in the East Midlands
- in West Mercia, a driver eating lasagne with a knife and fork while driving along a motorway
- a HGV driver boiling a kettle on the dashboard and another eating pickled gherkins from a jar with his elbows on the steering wheel in Surrey

Nicholas Reed, National Highways' Road Safety Lead for the South West, said:

The HGV cabs are an important part of our commitment to tackling unsafe driving and those who take unnecessary risks with their own safety and that of others on the road.

The number of people found using their mobile phone while driving is quite alarming. You are four times more likely to be in a crash if you use your phone and, if caught, face a £200 fine and six points on your licence.

Through this fortnight of action on the M5 and M4 we want to make

all of our roads safer by raising awareness and encouraging motorists to consider their driving behaviour.

From their elevated viewpoint in the unmarked HGV cabs, police officers are able to spot people driving dangerously – whatever vehicle they may be in.

Police patrol motorways and major A roads in National Highways HGV cabs

Consequences for the drivers range from warnings to fixed penalty notices, court summons or even arrest.

In addition to the operational patrols, partners taking part in Operation Peninsula will be present at motorway services along the M5 and M4, offering advice to drivers such as what to do in a breakdown and ensuring load safety.

National Highways' traffic officers will be providing free tyre checks and safety tips, and vehicle checks will also be carried out by the DVSA (Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency) at various locations along the M5 and M4.

Four regional forces are taking part in Operation Peninsula – Gloucestershire, Wiltshire, Avon and Somerset and Devon and Cornwall – and the Devon and Somerset Fire Service will also be playing a part during the road safety fortnight.

At Taunton Deane Services on Friday, 17th September, Avon and Somerset Police will also be joining forces with Somerset Council, the DVSA, Devon and Somerset Fire Service and National Highways at a 'Fit for the Road' event.

Caroline Hicks, the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency's (DVSA) Head of Regulatory Services & Transformation, added:

We will be conducting our vital enforcement work during this operation across the South West, as we do throughout the year, ensuring commercial vehicles are both roadworthy and safe.

We are determined to protect the public from dangerous drivers and vehicles on UK roads and ensure that non-compliance, whether intentional or not, does not endanger the public.

We are delighted to be a part of this key road safety exercise alongside our partners.

And Nina Day from the Health and Safety Executive's Transport Sector, said:

Employers must ensure that drivers, other workers, and members of the public are kept safe when vehicles are used for work.

There are legal requirements for employers to have robust

procedures in place to manage vehicle safety, including ensuring suitable procedures are in place, providing workers with appropriate training and equipment, maintaining equipment and vehicles, and supporting drivers when they raise concerns.

HSE works closely with our partner agencies to help vehicle operators and load consignors understand their legal responsibilities.

General enquiries

Members of the public should contact the National Highways customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

Media enquiries

Journalists should contact the National Highways press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.