

Motorists urged to make Friday 19 July 'check your vehicle day'

As schools break up and holidays begin across the country, Highways England is calling on motorists to check their vehicles to help keep traffic flowing.

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The company has teamed up with organisations working with drivers to urge people heading off on the great summer getaway to be prepared and to check their vehicles in advance to avoid breaking down.

The joint call to make Friday 19 July 'check your vehicle day' comes as part of Highways England's ongoing safety campaign about motorway driving.

It advises motorists what to do if they break down and reminds them to follow speed limits, to keep left except when overtaking and not to ignore red X signals above closed lanes.

The 'check your vehicle day' is being supported by 1992 Formula 1 World Champion Nigel Mansell CBE, in his role as IAM RoadSmart president, the RAC, Michelin UK, Green Flag and Halfords Autocentres.

Highways England's head of road safety, Richard Leonard, said:

Breakdowns are still too common. We'd urge motorists to check their vehicles on a regular basis and this week is really important because we know that many schools break up for summer and people are setting off on holidays and getaways.

Nigel Mansell added:

The 'check your vehicle day' is a great initiative from Highways England. As someone who raced in Formula 1 for well over a decade, I know a thing or two about good vehicle preparation – and what this means for getting to your finish line.

Making sure your car is fully ready for the journey ahead could not only save you and your family a lot of heartache on the way to your destination; but ensure that you, your occupants and other road users are as safe as possible.

It should be a weekly task for the driver to make sure all lights are working on his or her car, all glass areas are clean, wipers clear the windscreen properly, tyres at least meet legal requirements and water and oil levels are topped up.

I am delighted to give my stamp of approval to Highways England's call to action and please pay attention to it, as it could save your life and those around you.

July and August are the busiest months for breakdowns on motorways and major A-roads with one breakdown reported every two minutes during the final weekend in July and first weekend in August.

Highways England is expecting to respond to an extra 700 breakdowns a week for the next six weeks, taking the average number of motorway breakdowns each week to almost 5,000.

RAC patrol of the year, Ben Aldous, said:

No-one wants a breakdown to ruin the start of their holiday, yet so many of the problems we go out to at this time of year are perfectly preventable if drivers check over their car before they take to the road.

We urge holidaymakers to take part in this initiative by Highways England and spend just a few minutes checking the basics like oil, coolant and tyres on their cars before they get packed up. Doing this could make the difference between a smooth and trouble-free journey, and one plagued by the stress and frustration of being broken-down at the roadside.

Highways says simple checks are a way to make sure the vehicle is roadworthy. Things to consider are:

- check tyres: prior to setting off on a long/significant journey, check your tyre pressures are suitable for the load and the condition of your tyres, including the spare. Look out for cuts or wear and make sure the tyres have a minimum tread depth of 1.6mm, which is the legal limit
- check engine oil: use your dipstick to check oil regularly and before any long journey, and top up if needed. Take your car back to the garage

if you're topping up more than usual

- check water: to ensure you have good visibility, always keep your screen wash topped up so you can clear debris or dirt off your windscreen
- check lights: if your indicators, hazard lights, headlights, fog lights, reverse lights or brake lights are not functioning properly, you are putting yourself and your family at risk. In addition, light malfunctions can be a reason for your vehicle to fail its MoT
- check fuel: before setting out, check your fuel levels and make sure you have enough to get to your destination

Highways England has also issued five basic safety tips to follow if your car does break down on a motorway:

- get away from the traffic. Exit the motorway or get to an emergency area or hard shoulder and use the free phone provided
- if that's not possible, move left onto the verge
- get out of the left side of your car and behind the barrier if you can and it is safe to do so
- get help – contact your breakdown provider or Highways England on 0300 123 5000
- if you break down in moving traffic and cannot leave your car, keep your seatbelt and hazard lights on and call 999

Brian Porteous, technical manager for car, van and 4x4 for Michelin UK, said:

Tyre maintenance is critical to road safety. Your tyres are the only point of contact your car has with the road.

A car tyre contact patch is approximately the size of your hand, but is responsible for delivering braking, traction and handling, so it's easy to understand why there can be serious consequences if tyres are not maintained properly. You should inspect your tyres regularly for wear and damage and ask a professional for advice if uncertain. Tyre pressures should be checked against the car manufacturer's recommendation at least once every month and before every long journey.

Claire Hildreth, national service delivery manager at Green Flag, said:

Last year the breakdown industry dealt with over 600,000 breakdowns over the school summer holidays, throughout the entire road network; many of these could have been avoided.

Green Flag is pleased to be backing Highways England and is throwing its support behind 'check your vehicle day' because while no-one plans to break down, it is important to plan your journey and check your vehicle to reduce the chances of it happening.

Ella Colley, Halfords summer motoring expert, said:

Holiday road trips can be tiring as drivers put up with rowdy passengers, roadworks and wrong directions, so when it comes to having a less stressful holiday being prepared pays dividends. This is a great initiative by Highways England and it shows the importance of proper vehicle checks.

Our research also shows that only a quarter of drivers get their cars checked every four months or less frequently.

Although these are fairly simple, it is important they are carried out frequently to help avoid hassle and breaking down on long road trips. It's probably worth giving your car a quick health check this weekend or taking it to Halfords Autocentres where our expert colleagues and technicians will do it for you for free.

Highways England will again be doing its bit to help keep the country moving with its dedicated traffic officer service on-hand to those who run into problems.

You can find more advice on [our website](#), or download a [vehicle safety checks leaflet](#).

General enquiries

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

Media enquiries

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