

Press release: ‘Don’t be a Space Invader’ – stay safe, stay back says Highways England

New figures show that one in eight of all road casualties are caused by people who drive too close to the vehicle in front, with more than 100 people killed or seriously injured each year.

While a small minority of tailgating is deliberate, most is unintentional by drivers who are simply unaware they are dangerously invading someone else’s space.

So a safety campaign launched today uses the well-known Space Invader video game character to alert drivers to the anti-social nature and risks of tailgating.

Space Invader ‘Tailgating’ campaign

A survey by Highways England reveals that tailgating is the biggest single bugbear that drivers have about other road users. And in-car research – using dashcams, facial recognition, emotion tracking and heart monitors – reveals that a driver’s typical reaction to someone who tailgates them is surprise, anger and contempt, with a spike in heart rate.

Nearly 9 out of 10 people say they have either been tailgated or seen it. And more than a quarter of drivers admitted to tailgating.

The ‘Don’t be a Space Invader – stay safe, stay back’ campaign is supported by one of the world’s best drivers. Former Formula 1 world champion Nigel Mansell, who is President of the Institute of Advanced Motorists RoadSmart, says:

Tailgating is a driving habit I utterly deplore. Not only is it aggressive and intimidating, but it can lead to a crash with a tragic outcome.

There is absolutely no upside to it – you will not get to your destination faster, you are not a skilled driver for doing it, and you are putting so many innocent people at risk. So I very much back this campaign to highlight the dangers of tailgating.

Former Formula 1 world champion Nigel Mansell is backing the campaign

Highways England says good drivers leave plenty of safe space for themselves and others.

Richard Leonard, Head of Road Safety at Highways England, says:

If you get too close to the car in front, you won't be able to react and stop in time if they suddenly brake.

Tailgating makes the driver in front feel targeted and victimised, distracting their attention from the road ahead and making them more likely to make a mistake.

It is intimidating and frightening if you're on the receiving end. If that leads to a collision, then people in both vehicles could end up seriously injured or killed. We want everyone to travel safely, so the advice is – stay safe, stay back.

If you wonder whether you are 'space invading', then remember the Highway Code, which says that drivers should allow at least a two second gap, which should be doubled on wet roads. If you are tailgated, then avoid speeding up, slowing down or staring in the rear-view mirror. Reduce the risk to yourself by driving normally, signalling clearly and allowing people to overtake.

Being a Space Invader can also cost you money. One insurance company reports that almost a quarter of accident claims between January and August this year involved either a policy holder's or a third party's vehicle being hit from behind.

Andy Watson, Chief Executive of insurer Ageas, says:

A bump won't just damage your vehicle, it's likely that it will also hit your pocket when it comes to renew your insurance. So we urge all drivers to follow the advice of Highways England and back off from the driver in front.

Thatcham Research are experts in vehicle safety technology, vehicle security and crash repair. Director of Research at Thatcham, Matthew Avery, says:

Tailgating is one of the most dangerous driver behaviours seen on UK roads. Not only does it intimidate others and create 'phantom' traffic jams via the ripple effect of sharp braking, it is also a leading cause of accidents. Thatcham Research is proud to offer our full support to this potentially life-saving Highways England campaign.

National Express, which will carry the campaign on some of its long-distance coaches, is among supporters of the campaign that also include the National Police Chiefs Council, leading road safety bodies Brake and the Institute for Advanced Motorists, and the motor insurer Thatcham.

Highways England has a dedicated [webpage](#) where drivers can find more information about tailgating and what they can do to stay safe.

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.