

Press release: Highways England driving home the importance of towing safely

Highways England traffic officers joined Road Safety Engineer Irene Stewart at the M5 Junction 19 service area to provide information and practical tips to all motorists with caravans, trailers and horse boxes.

Behind the North East, the South West region has experienced the highest number of caravan/trailer incidents statistically, with 850 incidents across the network between January 2017 and May 2018, and 460 of those occurring in the summer months of May to September last year.

And as part of an ongoing campaign, Highways England is encouraging drivers to carry out a few simple safety checks before setting off on journeys.

Beverley Hannah, South West Regional Safety Co-ordinator for Highways England, said:

Safety is always our priority and we're delighted that so many people came along to speak to us while we were at the event.

We received interest from general motorists, as well as caravan and motorhome owners, and it was a great opportunity for us to meet people that were taking their caravans or trailers away on holiday this summer and offer them pointers on how to stay safe while towing.

Those stopping off at the services were able to learn more about Highways England and how it manages the safety of drivers and controls traffic following incidents, and also received key tyre safety tips and guidance from the Tyresafe awareness group.

Both Highways England and Avon and Somerset Police, advise anyone towing a caravan, boat, horse box or trailer to take some simple steps to ensure a trouble-free journey, including:

- Carry out a final maintenance check before setting off, and leave plenty of time for your journey
- Be aware that driving while towing will inevitably affect the vehicle's performance, especially braking distances
- Check that the vehicle and load are secure and the weight is correctly distributed in accordance with the manufacturers' specifications
- Make sure you are adequately covered for recovery and breakdown
- Know the correct speed limit for your vehicle and the roads you travel on, and don't drive faster than the speed limit for the type of road
- Towing mirrors not only allow you to view to the rear, in most cases

they are a legal requirement when towing a wider trailer

- Driving licences place restrictions on the trailers that you can tow, you may need to take a further test to progress to towing larger trailers
- If your caravan or trailer starts to snake or swerve, it's a sign you're going too fast or the trailer is loaded incorrectly. Ease off the accelerator and reduce your speed gently
- Don't brake harshly on a bend, as it makes the trailer unstable. Reduce your speed in plenty of time for any hazard
- You shouldn't drive in the right hand lane of a motorway with three or more lanes

Supt Andy Williams, Head of Road Safety for Avon and Somerset Police, said:

We want everyone to arrive safely at their destination so if you're towing any sort of trailer please take extra steps to ensure you're prepared before the start of your journey.

Remembering these simple road safety rules while you're driving can also reduce the risk of having an incident.

Stuart Jackson, TyreSafe chairman, said:

TyreSafe is a firm supporter of Highways England's engagement activities with motorists as both organisations seek to reduce the number of incidents on the roads.

Tyre checks are essential to reduce risks as they are the only part of the vehicle in contact with the road and, if they're not roadworthy, steering and braking will be compromised, too. TyreSafe encourages all drivers to check their tyres at least once a month and before long journeys.

Three further towing and tyre safety events are planned at Gordano Services – on Friday, 29 June, Monday, 2 July, and Friday, 6 July, between 10am and 3.30pm – and similar events are also planned for other areas of the South West.

Highways England interviewees will be available at Gordano Services on Friday, 29 June between 10am and 12 noon. Please contact Neville Smith on 0300 470 4337 or Nicola Wesson on 0300 470 6218 to arrange.

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.