

Show your vehicle some TLC in lockdown

This follows a new survey of the nation's drivers, revealing more than half (54%) did not know when their next service is due.

Nearly a third (32%) of road users admit they only carry out basic vehicle maintenance, such as checking their tyre pressure or oil levels, at best every few months or never. This is in spite of advice to perform regular vehicle maintenance – even when a vehicle is not in regular use during lockdown – on top of the recommended annual service and mandatory MOT.

People must stay at home during the lockdown except for the permitted reasons, but carrying out regular maintenance and checks will ensure vehicles are in good condition for when drivers are able to hit the road again.

In response to the survey, Highways England and partners – breakdown provider, Green Flag, and retailer, Halfords – are today spotlighting the importance of basic maintenance and checks in helping road users to avoid breakdowns or endangering themselves and other drivers. Without proper care and attention during lockdown, owners risk tyre problems, flat batteries, weather damage and issues due to fluid levels running low when they begin using their vehicle again.

Jeremy Phillips, head of road user safety, said:

While the country is still in lockdown, we want to remind drivers to act now and carry out those important basic checks. Doing regular maintenance, rather than waiting until the end of lockdown is in sight, will ensure their vehicles still work and preventable breakdowns are avoided when restrictions are lifted and the nation gets back on the road.

With the support of partners, Halfords and Green Flag, Highways England is committed to explaining the importance of carrying out vehicle checks even though drivers are restricted to essential travel only. A vehicle's condition can change while not in use.

Every year Highways England's traffic officers deal with more than 85,000 breakdowns – 40 per cent caused by vehicles running out of fuel, poor tyre maintenance, power loss and engine trouble. These basic checks and maintenance can prevent many breakdowns.

- Check tyres – check your tyre pressures are suitable for the load and their condition, including the spare. Always look out for cuts or wear and make sure tyres have a minimum tread depth of 1.6mm.
- Check fuel – before every journey, check your fuel levels and make sure you have enough to get to your destination. Always keep your tank at least one quarter full.
- Check engine oil – use your dipstick to check oil regularly. Top up if

needed. Take your car to a garage if filling more than usual.

- Check screen wash – check your water is within the minimum and maximum markings. Always keep screen wash topped up so you can clear debris or dirt off your windscreen.
- Check lights – look at whether indicators, hazard lights, headlights, fog lights, reverse lights and brake lights are functioning properly.

Highways England has prepared a [written guide](#) showing road users how to carry out the five most important vehicle checks: tyres, engine oil, water, lights and fuel. Knowing the benefits of regular checks and maintenance before getting on the road is key to travelling safely.

Mark Newberry, commercial director at Green Flag, said:

Cars are designed to be driven regularly and the components rely on regular use to stay in tip-top condition. A period of lockdown means many vehicles that may have been running every day could now be used less, which can lead to a number of complications.

Car batteries are often the hardest hit. During the first lockdown, over 60% of our callouts were for battery-related issues and the colder weather will also have an impact by reducing the battery's ability to hold charge.

Carry out a few basic checks to make sure your car is ready for when you need it. Don't leave it until your next MOT or service if you know or feel there is something wrong with your car. Although we will be there to recover you at the roadside – no-one wants to break down, especially in the cold dark winter months.

A Halfords spokesperson said:

At this time of year, colder weather and snowy spells introduce additional risks that all motorists should be guarding against. With the ongoing lockdown many of us will be using our cars less right now, and problems can often occur when vehicles are left unused on our drives. So, it's more important than ever to make checks every time you're setting off on those essential journeys.

Halfords is open as an essential retailer to help keep Britain moving, and we offer a free 5-point car check at our stores and garages nationwide. Our trained staff will check your lights, wipers, battery, windscreen and MOT status so you can be sure you're on the road safely, or have the Halfords team fix it for you if not.

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.