

Mandatory MOT testing to be reintroduced from 1 August

- mandatory MOT tests for car, motorcycle and van owners in England, Scotland and Wales to be reintroduced to keep roads safe
- drivers encouraged to book a test in advance to ensure vehicles are in a roadworthy condition
- vehicle owners with an MOT due date before 1 August will still receive a 6-month exemption

Mandatory MOT testing is to be reintroduced from 1 August 2020 as COVID-19 restrictions are slowly lifted, Roads minister Baroness Vere has announced today (29 June 2020).

Due to the coronavirus outbreak, [drivers were granted a 6-month exemption from MOT testing in March to help slow the spread of the virus](#). However, as restrictions are eased when safe to do so, all drivers whose car, motorcycle or van is due for an MOT test from 1 August will be required to get a test certificate to continue driving their vehicle.

MOT tests are important for road safety and ensure that vehicle parts, including tyres, seatbelts, brakes, lights and exhausts, are in proper working order.

Drivers with an MOT due date before 1 August will still receive a 6-month exemption from testing. However, all vehicles must continue to be properly maintained and kept in a roadworthy condition, and people are able to voluntarily get their MOT sooner should they wish, even if they are exempt from the legal requirement. Motorists can be prosecuted for driving an unsafe vehicle.

Roads Minister Baroness Vere said:

As people return to our roads, it is vital that motorists are able to keep their vehicles safe. That's why as restrictions are eased, from 1 August MOT testing will again become mandatory.

Garages across the country are open and I urge drivers who are due for their MOT to book a test as soon they can.

Only some garages remained open to conduct essential services during the coronavirus outbreak, but now over 90% are open across the country. Testing capacity has already reached 70% of normal levels and is steadily increasing.

While exemptions are still available for vehicle owners with an MOT due date before 1 August, it is vital that drivers still take their vehicle to be checked if they notice something is wrong in the same way that they usually

would.

If drivers are vulnerable or self-isolating they should contact their local garage as many are offering pick-up and drop-off services, so drivers can get their car checked without having to visit a garage.

The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) has also issued [guidance to all MOT testers about safely conducting tests in line with the latest government advice](#).

[Applications open for Postgraduate Doctoral Loans](#)

Press release

SLC launches application service for postgraduate doctoral students in England



The Student Loans Company (SLC) has launched its student finance application service for postgraduate doctoral students in England.

Eligible students can apply for a Postgraduate Doctoral Loan to help them with tuition fees and living costs while they study courses such as PhDs.

[Applications for postgraduate master's students](#) opened earlier in the month.

Derek Ross, SLC Executive Director of Operations said: "I'm pleased to announce that applications are open for post graduate doctoral students. Students should apply [online](#) now. Applying as quickly and correctly as possible is the best way of making sure funding is in place before the new term starts."

Key facts about the Postgraduate Doctoral Loan

1. You can get up to £26,445 to help with course fees and living costs

2. The loan is paid directly to you. It will be divided equally over each year of your course
3. Returning students do not need to reapply for their funding
4. You start repaying your Postgraduate Doctoral Loan the April after you finish or leave your course. You repay 6% of what you earn over the repayment threshold which is currently £21,000 per annum. If you have other student loans you repay these at the same time.

For more information watch our short film on [Postgraduate Doctoral Loans](#)

Students may also follow SFE's [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) channels for all the latest news and updates.

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[New contract to deliver improved support for modern slavery victims](#)

Potential and confirmed victims of modern slavery will be able to access more flexible support under an improved service.

The new Modern Slavery Victim Care Contract, awarded to The Salvation Army today (Monday 29 June), will provide a service that better meets the needs of each victim, including those with specialist and complex needs.

As part of the National Referral Mechanism (NRM), it will ensure the safeguarding and protection of victims as well as provide tailored support to individual recovery needs, lifting victims out of situations of exploitation and putting them in a position where they can begin to rebuild their lives.

The new contract will go live later this year, following a period of transition from the current service.

Safeguarding Minister Victoria Atkins said:

The government is a world leader in tackling modern slavery, but we are always striving to improve support for victims so that they can get their lives back on track.

The new Victim Care Contract builds on the wide-ranging support the government already provides and ensures that people affected by this abhorrent crime receive personalised, professional care.

Under the current service, victims of modern slavery who have been referred

by a designated First Responder, such as a specified charity worker or a law enforcement officer, can access support.

This includes accommodation, where needed, as well as financial support and access to a support worker.

The new contract will continue to provide this support and will also introduce new services for victims. For example, during the first year of the contract the government will work with law enforcement partners to test the set-up and operation of a new provision of Places of Safety.

This new service is aimed at the most vulnerable victims rescued from exploitation and will provide them with a safe place for up to three working days to consider if they want to enter the NRM.

Commissioner Anthony Cotterill, leader of The Salvation Army in the United Kingdom Territory with the Republic of Ireland, said:

The Salvation Army has been privileged to work alongside our partners to support thousands of victims of modern slavery as they rebuild their lives.

We are grateful for the opportunity to not only continue to serve these most vulnerable people but that through the new Victim Care Contract we can extend the support available to them at all stages of their recovery.

Working closely with the Home Office and our partners, we will build on the improvements and partnerships we have delivered over the past nine years, continue to add value to the entitlements survivors of slavery receive and ensure their needs are properly managed and respected.

The Salvation Army will remain at the forefront of the fight to help today's survivors overcome the challenges they face and protect other vulnerable people from becoming the victims of the future.

As with the existing contract, all victims' needs will be individually determined on entry to the service, continually re-assessed throughout and considered again when they are preparing to leave.

But the new contract will allow for more specialised services to meet those needs, including varied accommodation and improved support for those with complex requirements.

In addition, the new contract will introduce journey plans to help victims work with their support worker to recover from and reflect on their experiences, and then begin to move on to independence outside of the service.

The new contract is part of the government's ongoing efforts to improve the system of identification and support for modern slavery victims.

Swindon home furnishing company fails to meet recycling duties

A company based in Swindon that sells kitchens, sofas and a wide range of other furnishings will pay money to a wildlife charity for failing to register as a packaging producer.

The Environment Agency took enforcement action because for 13 years, from 2004 until 2017, Neptune (Europe) Ltd failed to recycle enough waste packaging including cardboard, plastic, paint tins and wooden pallets.

Any company producing more than 50 tonnes of packaging a year with a turnover of above £2 million, must register with the Environment Agency or a packaging compliance scheme, and meet their responsibilities for recycling waste packaging.

Neptune (Europe) Ltd, of Blagrove in Swindon, is a furniture importer, seller and wholesaler. They sell everything from kitchens to bathrooms as well as household accessories.

Tessa Bowering, a senior technical officer for the Environment Agency, said:

We all need to do our bit for the environment. Neptune (Europe) Ltd should have met its recycling obligations, which it failed to do for a prolonged period of time. However, the company cooperated with the Environment Agency to address the offences it had committed and is now compliant with the regulations.

They will pay £17,350 to the Wiltshire Wildlife Trust, who will use the money for 4 projects; Ravensroost Wood Nature Reserve, Malmesbury, Clouts Wood Nature Reserve, Wroughton, Cloatley Meadows Nature Reserve, Malmesbury and The Firs Nature Reserve, Royal Wootton Bassett. All of these projects will protect, restore and enhance the natural environment.

Wiltshire Wildlife Trust Director Dr Gary Mantle MBE said:

Our nature reserves play an important part in raising awareness about the value of the natural world. We are looking forward to using this contribution to the trust to help us deliver some great projects that benefit wildlife and people.

Enforcement undertakings allow companies and individuals to make amends for breaching environmental regulations, including through a financial contribution to a local project.

In agreeing to this type of civil sanction, the Environment Agency must be satisfied the offender will make changes to its operations to prevent future breaches of packaging legislation.

The Environment Agency continues to prosecute organisations and individuals where evidence shows high levels of culpability and serious environmental harm.

The company was sanctioned under the Producer Responsibility Obligations (Packaging Waste) Regulations 2007.

Stay safe around rivers

As ministers ease restrictions on movement caused by the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, the public is being warned to keep safe around rivers and canals.

The Environment Agency, which manages many locks, weirs and bridges along the River Thames through Wiltshire, Oxfordshire, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Surrey and south-west London, wants people to remember the hazards under the water.

[Guidance online at GOV.UK](#) – search staying safe around water – shows the message is clear: vigilance can save lives, and water-related accidents can be avoided by knowing how to stay safe.

Top tips for river safety:

1. Don't jump or dive in as the depth may vary and there can be unseen hazards.
2. Don't go in near weirs, locks, pipes and sluices. These and some other water features are often linked with strong currents.
3. Inland waters can be very cold, no matter how warm the weather. Those going into cold water can get cramp and experience breathing difficulties very quickly.
4. Keep a look out for boat traffic. Boaters, especially on larger vessels, can find it very hard to spot swimmers.

Parents and guardians can help keep children in their care safe by:

- teaching them to swim
- warning them not to go into water alone, or unsupervised
- ensuring they know where the children are and what they are doing

- supervising them closely when near any open water

Drowning can occur very quickly, even in shallow water, and the key to keeping safe is to take all necessary precautions to avoid getting into difficulty in the first place.

Experience shows it is often young people who get into trouble whilst swimming in open water, which contains hazards, particularly in and around locks, weirs and bridges. Unexpectedly cold waters or strong currents can also catch bathers off-guard.

Youngsters are often seen jumping off the many bridges along the Thames. While this may seem like great fun, there are hidden dangers in the water that can cause tragic consequences.

Russell Robson, River Thames operations manager for the Environment Agency, said:

Summer is always a busy time on our rivers, especially if the weather is good.

The River Thames is a focal point for leisure time, but I'd prefer people didn't swim in any river, unless part of an organised event.

One of the main risks is cold-water shock, causing you to breathe in water, weakening your muscles, and cause immediate heart problems. Unseen currents and reeds beneath the surface could pull you under.

I'd urge parents and guardians to supervise younger children closely in and around water. Teenagers and young adults should be warned of the dangers and to remember some basic safety points when out having fun.

Read and act upon our water safety advice on GOV.UK – search stay safe around water.

Anyone out in any kind of boat should wear a life jacket.