



‘DRIVING SAFELY, IN SUMMER’ Holiday Driving Tips July 2024

INTRODUCTION

These notes are an extract from our ‘Driving Safely in Summer. Holiday Driving Tips’ webinar of 27 July 2025.

Dates for future webinars can be found at www.olderdriversforum.com/gloucestershire-events If you are interested in attending a webinar, or have a relative or friend who might benefit, please register by emailing odfglos@gmail.com

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With summer many of us are planning visits to families and friends, and road trips in the UK or abroad. This can involve driving hundreds of miles in a day, when normally we only drive a hundred miles in a month. This places additional demands on driver and vehicle as we adjust to,

- Sustaining high levels of concentration for longer periods of time
- Driving on unfamiliar roads, and unfamiliar categories of roads such as SMART motorways
- Higher traffic volumes and travelling at higher speeds
- Vehicle maintenance issues that are not apparent on local journeys.

With planning and preparation these challenges can be made much less of a risk.

There are three main elements to any driving scenario which we can influence: driving ability and knowledge, vehicle preparedness, and journey planning.

1. DRIVING ABILITY & KNOWLEDGE

Nearly 90% of collisions are due to human error. The first step in planning a longer journey is a check with care professionals that there are no health issues that impact our driving ability.

- ✓ **Check when you last had an eyesight test.** The College of Optometrist recommend a test at least every two years. 90% of all information used to drive is visual. By our 70's we can lose 20 to 30 degrees of peripheral vision which is why we become more vulnerable to collisions when merging with faster traffic on motorways. If you are prescribed glasses specify an anti-reflective coating to reduce sunlight glare. When driving with sunglasses they must also have prescription lenses.
- ✓ **Check with your GP that none of your medications impact your ability to drive.** Some medications can make you feel drowsy, so always ask for a non-drowsy option.
- ✓ **Maintain a regular exercise regime.** This is to ensure mobility is sustained and to keep reactions up to speed. By 64 our reactions can be 22 times slower than a 30-year-old. On motorways use mirrors earlier and look much further up the road to assess and have time to react to road hazards.
- ✓ **Refresh your Highway Code knowledge.** (The latest edition is dated 2022) This is particularly important if driving on unfamiliar categories of roads such as SMART motorways. Advice in the Code includes merging from a slip road, lane discipline, exit procedures, what to do in a breakdown. Remember not knowing the rules of the Highway Code is no excuse in the eyes of the police. To browse the Code online www.gov.uk/highway-code/contents To download the Code and subscribe for new rule alerts www.highwaycodeuk.co.uk
- ✓ **If driving abroad,** check websites such as AA or RAC for advice on local regulations and advice on what to do in an event of a breakdown. **112** is the emergency number in most of Europe. For the hard of hearing text **114**.
- ✓ **Keep driving regularly.** Share the driving if a couple so both of you keep sharp
- ✓ **To increase confidence and refresh driving skills take a mature driver review.** These are offered by organisations such as IAM RoadSmart and normally cost over £86. www.iamroadsmart.com/courses/mature-driver-review If you are a Gloucestershire resident, over 65 and wish to take up the Gloucestershire Road Safety Partnership's offer of a free review, email odfglos@gmail.com with your name, year of birth and postcode. If there are cognitive or mobility issues, then an assessment must take place at DVLA accredited Driving Mobility centre www.drivingmobility.org.uk

If you breakdown on a motorway and have a disability and cannot follow the Code rules:

- ✓ Switch on your hazard warning lights
- ✓ Stay in your vehicle with your seat belt on
- ✓ Call 999 and ask for the police. Alternatively press your SOS button if your vehicle has one and ask for the police
- ✓ If you are deaf, hard of hearing or speech impaired, register for the 999-text service (emergencySMS.net) before making your journey

2. VEHICLE PREPAREDNESS

The Office of National Statistics report mature driver' vehicles are driven just 32 miles a week. Longer journeys at higher speeds and in higher summer temperatures can expose vehicle issues that are not evident in short, local journeys. National Highways report one in five motorway breakdowns are due to tyre issues.

- ✓ **Check the condition of your tyres.** Ask a tyre centre to check wheel balance and alignment, tyre age, condition, and tread depth. In the wet at 50 mph a tyre with 1.6mm of tread, the legal limit, takes 25% longer to stop than tyres with 3mm of tread. We recommend replacing tyres at 3mm. If you will be carrying a heavier load than usual, check the manufacturers recommended tyre pressure settings.
- ✓ **Consult with your garage about the condition of your brakes.** Higher speeds, heavier loads and driving on hilly or mountainous roads can accelerate brake wear. Give your garage the approximate mileage and type of roads on your trip and ask whether any preventative brake maintenance is required.
- ✓ **Check when your air conditioning was last recharged.** Every year this system can lose 10% of the refrigerant, so will need recharging every two to three years.
- ✓ **Review your essential equipment.** This should include V5C registration, insurance and breakdown service documents, mobile phone charger, torch, warning triangle, high visibility fluorescent bibs for all occupants, sunscreen, windscreen shade, wet wipes and a passenger travel pillow. Consider investing in a plug-in cool box to ensure a plentiful supply of cold water. Also have maps for the areas where you are travelling, in case of a diversion and you can't rely on your sat nav. If your sat nav is a few years old check whether there is a mapping update available. Free community sat nav apps such as Waze also provide real time traffic updates and dynamic re-routing.
- ✓ **Download the What3Words app.** This identifies a location by three words which can be given to the emergency or recovery services. In the apps settings the language can be changed if you are travelling abroad.
- ✓ **If you have a hidden disability wear a Sunflower scheme lanyard and have a sticker on your car.** This will alert the emergency services that you may need more support. www.hiddendisabilitiesstore.com This scheme is recognised internationally.
- ✓ **Have a Lions Club 'message in a bottle' with personal and medical details** in the glove compartment to assist emergency services. These are available for free at GP surgeries and pharmacies.
- ✓ **Check whether any drivers' aids could be helpful.** If you have reduced peripheral vision, consider fitting panoramic rear-view mirrors, and blind spot mirrors that can be attached to a wing mirror.

- ✓ **If traveling abroad**, check websites such as AA or RAC on mandatory equipment required.
- ✓ **Refresh your knowledge from your car's handbook on advanced driving assistance systems (ADAS) function.** These systems are not foolproof and in different weather and road conditions on a long journey may react in an unexpected manner. These are often referenced in handbook disclaimers, so be aware so you can react accordingly.
- ✓ **Have a 'Day Before Travel' vehicle checklist.** This should include refuelling or recharging to avoid costly motorways service station, final fluids and tyre pressure checks. Also tighten the fixings of any roof bars and roof box.
- ✓ **Ensure 'safe load' packing.** Try and pack everything in a suitcase or storage box, and only pack to the level of the headrest. This will avoid anything hitting you or your passenger if you must brake suddenly and keeps your rear-view mirror field of vision clear.

2. JOURNEY PLANNING

Preparing for a long journey can be exhausting. Research indicates 15 to 20% of incidents on motorways are due to fatigue. Plan to get as much packing done the day before departure, have no social commitments, and get a good night's sleep.

- ✓ **A starting point on planning is to identify how far you are comfortable driving in a day.**
- ✓ **Consider when you will travel.** Avoid high volume peak weekends after schools' brake-up. This year that falls on 26/27 July. Avoid rush hours which are statistically the riskiest times to be driving. Avoid driving in low sunlight.
- ✓ **Plan break stops.** The recommendation is a 15-minute break every two hours. During the break walk around and have a stretch. If you are a couple this is an opportunity for a driver changeover. Never leave a pet in the car.
- ✓ **Check National Highways website.** www.nationalhighways.co.uk This provides information on road works, travel restrictions and any major events that might disrupt your journey. If travelling abroad check 'Foreign travel advice' on the government website www.gov.uk
- ✓ **Check your destination area for collision hotspots and be extra vigilant.** This can be done by the search facility at www.crashmap.co.uk Also consult online maps with street view to identify and avoid difficult junctions. Turning right at T-junctions is the most frequent setting for mature driver collisions.
- ✓ **Pre-programme your sat nav.** Remember if you use your mobile as your sat nav it is against the law to touch the screen whilst driving.

- ✓ **Let family and friends know your itinerary.** There are various apps available which can enable them to track your progress.
- ✓ **Finally check weather reports.** If there are weather warnings, no journey is worth the risk. Subscribe for weather warnings at www.metoffice.co.uk
- ✓ **If driving in the rain in France,** be aware speed limits are reduced.

4. EV DRIVER ADVICE

- ✓ **Know the real-world range of your car.** Driving at 70mph can reduce range by 20 to 30%.
- ✓ **EVs' sat navs will work out likely 'state of charge' enroute and plan recharging/rest breaks.** EVs charge quickest in 20% to 80% range, so it is better to plan two short rest breaks rather than one long charge.
- ✓ **Specialist EV apps such as Zap map show location and status on charging stations.** But always have a back-up plan if there is a problem with your chosen charger.
- ✓ **Check payment options,** as some networks require pre-registered cards or apps.
- ✓ **If you have an overnight stay,** make sure your accommodation has access to nearby public chargers.

5. FINAL THOUGHT

In summer and on longer journeys on unfamiliar roads we must always be prepared for the unexpected. So, if you encounter delays which push you out of your comfort zone of how long you wish to drive ... take a break!

And if necessary, stay somewhere overnight, letting family and friends know of the change in your itinerary.

It is better to arrive safe than not at all.

For more information
www.olderdriversforum.com

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