

Poor maintenance and careless driving makes April fools

Submitted by: Green Flag Group

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The first day in April is traditionally a day for practical jokes and hoaxes, but roadside assistance expert Green Flag urges motorists to ensure the joke isn't on them this year, by avoiding unnecessary breakdowns and accidents.

Last April Fool's Day, Green Flag responded to almost 5,000 breakdowns, with the majority due to driver error, neglect or poor vehicle maintenance, and many could have been avoided.

Green Flag spokesperson Melanie Denny said: "Becoming stranded at the roadside is no joke. Most drivers would consider a breakdown a major inconvenience, yet many motorists do not maintain their vehicles properly by performing regular checks on tyres, brakes, lights, oil and water levels."

Over 2,000 of breakdowns attended by Green Flag last April 1 were due to battery problems. Melanie adds: "It's a good idea to have your car battery checked out regularly to ensure it is in good condition. Many local garages will do this for you free of charge so there really is no excuse."

The second most common problem was accident damage, accounting for almost 500 calls for assistance. This April Fool's Day, Green Flag reminds drivers to avoid the type of behaviour that can lead to serious road accidents. Recent research by Green Flag and Brake* into driver attitudes on a number of safety issues revealed some alarming results:

- Almost half (47 per cent) of drivers surveyed said they never check their brakes
- A fifth relied on other people to check their tyres, oil and water levels
- Almost half (46 per cent) had driven a car they knew had a potentially dangerous mechanical problem
- Half of drivers surveyed had drunk alcohol before driving at least once in the past year
- Almost half (44 per cent) admitted driving after less than five hours' sleep.

To avoid accidents, Green Flag advises drivers not to drink any alcohol before driving, get a good nights' sleep and take regular breaks at least every two hours on long journeys.

The top five causes of breakdowns last April Fool's Day were:

1. Battery problems 2,000
2. Accidents 500
3. Punctures/wheel problems 400
4. Lost/stolen keys 200
5. Engine cut-out 200

Melanie concludes: "Motorists who take care of their vehicles and think carefully before getting behind

the wheel can prove they are nobody's fool by reducing the number of breakdowns and accidents they have, but Green Flag will be on hand 24-hours a day, 365 days a year should they need us."

Ends

*Brake is a national not-for-profit road safety charity. Brake exists to stop the 3,500 deaths and 33,700 serious injuries that occur on Britain's roads every year and to care for people traumatised by road crashes. Brake produces educational road safety literature and runs events including Road Safety Week.

Notes to editors

For radio interviews or images please contact the press office (see below)

Figures based on a survey of 1,000 drivers conducted by Brake volunteers June – October 2004.

Green Flag Motoring Assistance provides roadside rescue and recovery to almost 5m customers 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

Green Flag's incident management centre in Leeds handles around 1m calls each year.

Media calls

For further information contact Nigel Charlesworth or Melanie Denny at Green Flag on 0113 399 1427/1387 (out of hours 07711 964 615).

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