

Motorists warned of risks as UK returns to roads from coronavirus lockdown

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The rapid return of cars to UK roads already busy with cyclists and pedestrians could create a number of safety and legal issues for motorists and other road users.

As traffic on UK roads steadily increases with more people returning to work or choosing to travel further afield since the slight relaxation of lockdown rules, legal protection and motor breakdown assistance provider ARAG has highlighted four factors that are likely to make driving and cycling more hazardous for all:

- Cars not used in weeks may not be safe to drive legally
- Drivers may be out of practice if they haven't driven for some time
- Unfamiliar traffic conditions with fewer cars and more cyclists and pedestrians
- More inexperienced cyclists who have started or returned to cycling during lockdown

As well as the increased number of cyclists using the roads throughout the country, drivers will also need to be aware of pedestrians stepping into the carriageway to observe social distancing.

"MOT expiry dates may have been extended, but motorists still need to ensure that their vehicle is safe to drive", comments ARAG's Marketing Manager, Rachael Wornes, "It shouldn't take long to check that tyres are inflated and brakes are working properly, and many garages are still open if you are in any doubt at all about your car's safety."

"A long break from driving can affect drivers too. It's a good idea to reacquaint yourself with your vehicle before undertaking any long journeys, make a short, local trip or two, and give yourself plenty of time to get used to driving again."

ARAG is urging motorists who may not have driven for some weeks to be cautious getting back on the road and to take some sensible precautions before getting behind the wheel.

- Check - your vehicle is safe to drive and that neither your vehicle tax nor insurance have lapsed during lockdown. Highways England has published a helpful checklist for drivers (<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/check-your-vehicle-for-these-five-things-before-driving>)
- Arrange - a short, local drive to reacquaint yourself with driving before embarking on any longer, more demanding journeys
- Plan - any necessary longer journeys to ensure that you have plenty of time to break your journey, along the way

As well as the obvious safety implications, ARAG has also identified a number of legal risks that returning drivers need to be conscious of, including driving an unsafe vehicle, speeding on familiar roads that are no longer congested, as well as driving without checking that tax and insurance have been renewed.

The penalties for the motoring offences that they could commit as a result are:

- Using a vehicle in a dangerous condition - maximum penalty of GBP 2,500 fine (for car drivers) and possible disqualification
- Speeding - maximum penalty of GBP 1,000 fine (GBP 2,500 on motorways) and possible disqualification
- Driving without insurance - maximum penalty of an unlimited fine and possible disqualification

“UK roads will see a fraction of the traffic that we’re used to seeing over a normal Bank Holiday weekend,” continues Wornes, “but many are likely to be busier than they have been since the lockdown began. Taking a few simple precautions should help motorists who haven’t driven in a while to stay the right side of the law and help keep the roads as safe as possible for everyone.”

Notes to Editors

ARAG plc (<https://www.arag.co.uk>) is part of the global ARAG Group, the largest family-owned enterprise in the German insurance industry. Founded in 1935, on the principle that every citizen should be able to assert their legal rights, ARAG now employs more than 4,100 people around the world and generates revenue and premium income totalling 1.7 billion Euro.

Operating in the UK since 2006, ARAG plc provides a comprehensive suite of ‘before-the-event’ and ‘after-the-event’ legal insurance products and assistance solutions to protect both businesses and individuals.

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