

On the move



ADVICE
FOR
LADY
DRIVERS

Safety for woman drivers

Women account for about 40% of the motorists currently on the road in the UK. Statistically we are the safest drivers, which probably explains why men adore telling jokes about us - but are we safe ourselves? What can we do to ensure that we are as safe as we can be when we travel the country's roads?

Feel confident

Any woman who regularly drives long distances, drives on her own, at night, or through particularly unpleasant areas will have experienced a genuinely frightening "what if I broke down here" feeling. There are no hard and fast rules to car safety for women drivers, but there are some basic precautions you can take to help you feel confident, and also to give you a starting point if the worst happens and you do break down.

Common sense

All the tips we give you in this booklet are basic common sense. They may require you to plan more carefully and think ahead, rather than just leaping off into the sunset, but they will give you peace of mind and you will know that you are doing everything you can to make sure you are as safe in your car as you are on the road.



Doing it yourself

Knowing how your car works in basic terms is empowering. It means you don't have to ask a stranger for advice, you'll be able to assess what's wrong, and handling your car's basic maintenance and keeping it in good working order will help you to avoid becoming one of the 50% of breakdown incidents that occur as a direct lack of car maintenance.

Checked daily

Some things need to be checked daily - make sure you have enough petrol, make sure all your lights, your indicator, your horn and your wipers and washers are all working. Fill up your screen washer bottle, check your windscreen, lights, mirrors are clean and that your registration plate can be seen, and that your seat belts and brakes are working.

Weekly check

Once a week, maybe if you are cleaning the car at the weekend, check the oil level, check the water in the radiator (not while the engine's hot, though) and make sure all the tyres are at the right pressure, including the spare.



Where am I going?

Manufacturer's Handbook

Your car should be serviced at least every twelve months or as the manufacturer recommends. It's a good idea to familiarise yourself with your car's manufacturer's handbook and get to know the location of the automatic warning signals, like the ignition, oil, lights and the temperature warning gauge. Once a month you will need to use the handbook to check the cooling system level, the brake fluid level, the power steering fluid level and the battery fluid level. Smear the battery terminals with petroleum jelly (not normal grease) to prevent corrosion, and if you have an older car, make sure the fluid covers the plates. Double check that the locks all work too.

Winter blues

Winter can be particularly problematic for drivers and their vehicles, but there are still steps you can take to avoid being caught out. As you feel the weather becoming colder, top up the radiator to the correct level, using a mixture of water and anti-freeze. Also add anti-freeze to the water in the windscreen washer bottle. Check that all the in-car heating works, including the rear window so that you minimise the risk of being fogged up inside. Spray a water inhibitor into your door locks so they don't freeze up, and make sure that your car's ignition system is kept dry.

Car maintenance

Many local garages run excellent basic car maintenance classes, covering things like how to change a wheel and jump-start a car. The more you know yourself the less likely you are to have to make yourself vulnerable by asking for help.

Knowing exactly where you are going and exactly how you are going to get there guarantees that you will feel and appear more confident. There's nothing worse than having to pull in on a remote road and check your map, or ask someone for directions when you are on your own.

Avoid isolation

Plan your route and make sure it avoids isolated areas wherever possible, and try and arrange it so that you are travelling on well-lit busy streets and roads if you're driving at night. Writing it out clearly and keeping it close to hand, will make your progress much more efficient, and always carry an up to date map or road atlas with you.

Well lit

If you do get lost, ask for directions in a well-lit busy area, where there are other people about. Keep your doors locked and the windows closed, except for the driver's window, which you should roll down a little. Keep the engine running while you ask.

Good to talk

The more people you trust that know where you are, the better - give someone a ring when you're leaving, call them if you get delayed on the journey, and let them know you arrived safely.



A mobile phone, if you have one, is incredibly helpful if you need to ring and check directions, call the emergency services, let people know you're going to be delayed, and it means you can stay in the safety of your vehicle to call for help if necessary. If you're a woman who regularly travels alone it really is an essential. Just make sure it's charged up before you start, and don't forget the spare battery and car charger facility.

insect repellent, calamine lotion and travel sickness pills, and any medication you need to take regularly (i.e. an inhaler). Keep them in a bag or tin out of the reach of children. If the worst happens and you break down or have an accident you need to be prepared. Keep a blanket, a pillow, a warm and waterproof jacket (a reflective one is ideal or reflective armbands are worth carrying), an umbrella and flat comfortable shoes in the boot. Essentials for fixing minor

What should I take with me?



Useful supplies

If you don't have a mobile, take some small change (but keep it hidden) for emergency calls and a pen and paper for noting down numbers. A torch with some spare batteries is always a good idea if you have to walk to a phone or you need to check under the bonnet. A personal alarm is also reassuring, not just for in the car, but when you're getting to your car or out of it. Keep an ice-scraper and de-icer in the car in winter, and a cloth, a fire extinguisher and a First Aid kit for all year round. The motoring organisations sell standard First Aid kits containing plasters, dressings, bandages, eye pads – give them a ring and ask what the British Red Cross recommends you carry with you. It's also a good idea to carry painkillers, throat lozenges, antiseptic cream,

problems safely are a jack, a wheel brace a towrope, jump leads, a foot pump, a warning triangle, a spare wheel and a safety can containing five litres of petrol.

Good company

When you're travelling with children, make sure they've got enough to keep them occupied - toys, story tapes, puzzles etc. Although they are good company when you're travelling they can be a real distraction if they get bored!

Peace of mind

If you're a member of a motoring organisation (and it's an excellent investment to make, for peace of mind) remember to take your membership card with you and keep it where you can get to it easily, i.e. on the windscreen.



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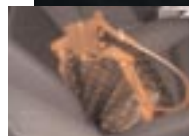
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Northampton
NN1 4XN



How can I be safe in my car?

Crimes involving vehicles in which the driver is present are thankfully unusual, which is why they make the headlines.

Minimise opportunity

You are probably not the criminal's target - your car is, or your handbag or stereo. You can help yourself by minimising the criminal's opportunity. Think of security in your car as an extension of your home security - you wouldn't leave your purse by an open window on street level in your house, so don't leave your handbag, phone or laptop lying on the passenger seat with the window down or the door unlocked - keep valuables out of sight.

Security conscious

Invest in a car security system - car alarms, steering wheel locks, locking fuel caps are all available from vehicle accessory shops, and put the security system stickers in your car windows as a deterrent.

How can I be safe on the road?



Never ever pick up hitchhikers. A lone figure trudging along the side of the road in the rain might appeal to your better nature but it is simply not worth the risk. Even a female hitchhiker on her own may have a male accomplice hiding somewhere out of sight. If someone's broken down and you want to help there's nothing stopping you calling a breakdown service from your mobile phone or from a public phone box in a safe area - you don't need to get personally involved.

Trusting instincts

There are no hard and fast rules, which is why you have to trust your instincts. Potential thieves may play on your sense of insecurity by gesturing to your wheel and indicating that you should pull over - if the car looks and feels fine, don't stop.

Stopping frequently

You can be a target for crime in slow-moving traffic, or when you're stopping frequently. Keep your windows and your sunroof closed, or only slightly open. When you have to stop, don't stop too close to the car in front.

Draw attention

If you think that someone's tailing you, or flashing their lights trying to gain your attention, make sure your doors are locked, windows closed, and don't make eye contact with them. Drive to the nearest police station if possible. If another driver forces you to stop, don't turn off your engine, but keep it running and if the driver gets out of his car to come towards you, put your hazard warning lights on and sound your horn to let other people know that you are in possible danger. Trying to drive straight at their vehicle will probably result in you stalling your car.

Defend yourself

By law you cannot carry weapons in your car but there is nothing stopping you using hairspray, a hairbrush, your keys, or anything handy to defend yourself with. Keep flashing your lights, sounding your horn, using a personal alarm and screaming!

Breaking down on the motorway is a scary prospect, but there are lots of measures in place on the motorway to help you. When you feel something is going wrong, try and keep calm, and see if you can get the car to the nearest services or leave at the next exit. Even if you've got a mobile, you should still use the emergency telephone to inform the Motorway Police where you are.

Get priority

The emergency telephone will connect you to the Police Motorway Control Centre - tell the operator the box number; which will be on the box, and that will help the Motorway Police to find you. They'll ask for your car details, like registration number. Let them know you are a woman on your own, and you'll be given priority. If someone else stops while you are on the phone, give the operator his or her details,

What do I do if I break down?



Emergency stop

If you think you need to stop immediately, put your hazard warning lights on and pull over to the hard shoulder, and get as close to the embankment as you can. Emergency phone boxes are one mile apart and arrow signs will show you where the nearest one is - you don't need any money or to be a member of a motoring organisation to use one. Don't reverse along the hard shoulder or walk across the carriageways to get to the phone box - one in seven people killed on motorways are pedestrians.

Other drivers

Get out of your car through the passenger door and lock it. Placing a warning triangle 150 metres behind your car will let other drivers know there's something wrong. Walk towards the traffic on the verge to the emergency telephone; if there are children with you, hold their hands and walk between them and the carriageway.

Oncoming traffic

Stand behind the telephone and face the oncoming traffic - you'll be shielded and it won't be obvious that you are a woman and on your own.

such as registration number; together with the make and model of their vehicle, and stay on the phone.

Not so obvious

Try to avoid getting back into your car - sit on the embankment instead. If you do want to get back into your car, sit in the passenger seat, as it won't look so obvious that you are on your own, and lock your doors.

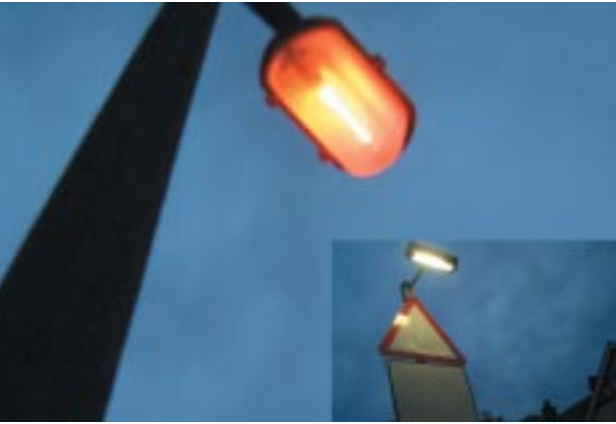
Proof of identity

If someone stops and offers to help you talk to them through the window and tell them that help is coming. When the police or a motoring organisation arrives, ask to see their ID through the window, and check they have got your name.

Doors locked

On other roads, if you decide there's something wrong with your car, try and pull up somewhere busy and well-lit, preferably near a public phone box if you haven't got a mobile. Call a motoring organisation or a garage, then stay in your car and lock the doors. Again when help arrives, ask to see their ID and only get out of the car when you are sure.

Where should I park?



When you are parking on the street try and choose a well-lit busy area. If you're parking in the daylight, imagine what it's going to be like in the dark. Multi-storey car parks can sometimes be frightening places, with dark corners. Try and park as close to the entrance, exit or paying booth as you can.

Be alert

When you go back to your car, get your car keys out in good time, check that no-one's in your car, then get in and lock all the doors before you start your engine.

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What do I do if I have an accident?



Legally you are obliged to stop if you are involved in an accident. Get witnesses' details, once you've made sure they actually saw the accident. Draw a rough sketch map of the accident scene, or take a photograph - see accident check list.

Don't panic

If someone's been injured, call an ambulance immediately and don't attempt to move him or her, unless they are more at risk by staying in their vehicle. Only administer First Aid if you know exactly what you are doing. If you haven't got a mobile, and there's no public phone nearby, enlist the help of anyone else around and ask them to find the nearest phone box - send more than one person in different directions if you can. The emergency services do not mind receiving several calls from the same accident.

What, where, when

The 999 operator will want to know where you are, the type and the severity of the accident, details of any casualties, and any hazards like fog, gas, chemicals, spilt fuel, power line damage or fire.

Keep calm

Try and keep calm, and don't smoke as the accident may have involved a chemical or petrol spillage. Turn off all the vehicle engines, and disconnect the battery if you know how to, as this will reduce the chance of fire.

Warning signs

If you have a reflective triangle place it 200m behind the accident to warn approaching traffic.

Roadside?

Let any casualties know that help's coming, keep them warm, but don't offer them cigarettes, food or drink as that might mean that medical help can't be given quickly when the emergency services arrive.

Accident check list

Date and time _____

Location(including road number if known) _____

Weather and road conditions _____

Other driver's details _____

Name _____

Address _____

Telephone Number _____

Insurance Company _____

Insurance Certificate and Expiry Date _____

Registration Number _____

WITNESSES _____

(1) _____

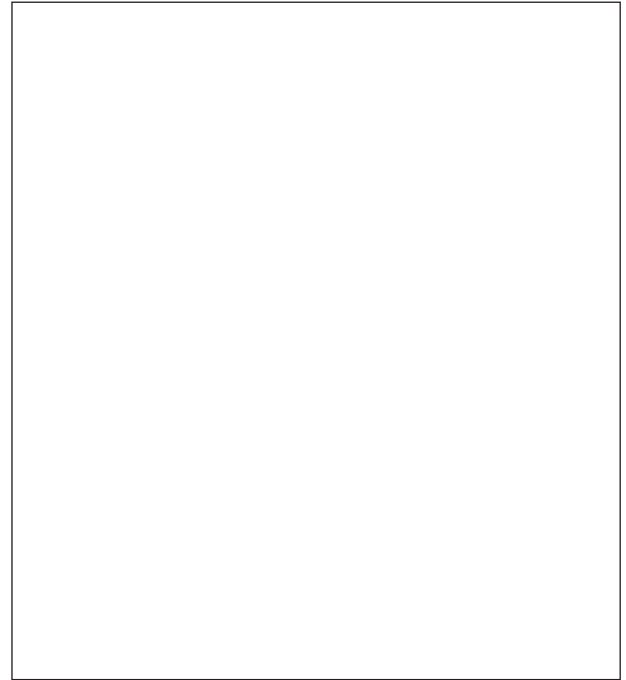
(2) _____

(3) _____

Police Officer's Number _____

Contact telephone Number _____

Sketch map of accident scene (include position of vehicles, directions of travel, width of road, length or skid marks and any other details which may be needed.



Guild of Experienced Motorists, Station road,
Forest Row, East Sussex. RH18 5EN.
Telephone number to join: 01342 825676

The British Red Cross
First Aid courses are available throughout the U.K. from the British Red Cross. Ask National Headquarters - telephone number 020 7235 5454 for the number of your nearest unit. www.redcross.org.uk
(Details correct at the time that this booklet was published)

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