

8 key updates road users need to know

Despite a number of new motoring laws being introduced this year, it seems a high proportion of road users remain unaware of the changing legislation and what it means for them.

A 2022 survey by the AA1 revealed that 61% of motorists had not read updates to the Highway Code and furthermore 8% were completely unaware of any changes.

In this article we summarise the latest updates for drivers and fleet owners to be aware of, to assist in keeping themselves and others safe on the road.

1

Hierarchy of road users

The Highway Code was updated on 29 January 2022 to reflect a hierarchy of road users, ultimately aiming to improve safety for the most vulnerable road users, i.e. pedestrians, horse-riders and cyclists. The hierarchy dictates that ‘those in charge of vehicles that can cause the greatest harm in the event of a collision bear the greatest responsibility to take care and reduce the danger they pose to others.’

- pedestrians
- cyclists
- horse riders
- motorcyclists
- cars/taxis
- vans/minibuses
- large passenger vehicles/heavy goods vehicles.

However the Department for Transport (DfT) is clear that all road users need to behave responsibly and show due care and consideration for others.

2

Giving way to pedestrians at junctions

The Highway Code now determines that pedestrians have priority at junctions, zebra crossings and parallel crossings. Where a pedestrian is either waiting to, or has already begun to cross a road, any other traffic must give way.

3

Being safe around cyclists

Drivers should be aware of the latest guidance on safe passing distances and situations where cyclists have priority. The updated code says motorists must leave at least 1.5m gap when overtaking cyclists at speeds up to 30mph and “give them more space” when overtaking at higher speeds. Drivers are also expected to give priority to cyclists at roundabouts and not attempt to overtake.



Motorists should leave at least a 1.5m gap when overtaking cyclists.



4

Safely parking and exiting vehicles

The Highway Code recommends a new method to safely exit a vehicle, known as the 'Dutch Reach' method which has been practised in the Netherlands since the 1970s. This involves opening a vehicle door from the inside with the hand furthest away from the handle, meaning the person exiting has to turn their body and look over their shoulder, increasing visibility of passing pedestrians, cyclists and motorcyclists.

5

Safe use of Electric Vehicle (EV) charging points

Reflecting the wider adoption of electric vehicles, for the first time the Highway Code includes guidance on EVs and their charging, specifically **rule 239**. This rule advises that EV drivers charging their vehicles should park close to the charge point and avoid creating a trip hazard for pedestrians from trailing cables. The Code also recommends displaying a warning sign and, once charging is complete, ensuring all cables and connectors are stored neatly.



6

Leaving the phone alone

The dangers of distracted driving due to mobile phone use have long been recognised. Despite this, a 2020 survey found that 29% of all UK drivers admitted to making or receiving calls whilst driving.²

In March, rules regarding the use of mobile phones whilst driving were tightened. The revised law clearly states that it's illegal to hold and use a phone, sat nav, tablet, or any device that can send or receive data, while driving a motor vehicle or riding a motorcycle. This also applies while:

- stationary at traffic lights
- queuing in traffic
- supervising a learner driver
- driving a car that turns off the engine when you stop moving
- holding and using a device that's offline or in flight mode.

29% of all UK drivers admit to making or receiving calls whilst driving

The use of hands-free devices (e.g. Bluetooth headsets, built-in sat navs) remains legal as long as drivers do not hold them at any time during usage.

Drivers caught breaking the above conditions road will be fined £200 and receive six points on their licence. Additionally, road users who have gained their licence within two years stand to face a driving ban.

Drivers caught using their mobile phone behind the wheel face a £200 fine and six points on their licence



There are very limited exceptions where using a mobile phone at the wheel is permitted, such as:

- needing to call 999 or 112 in an emergency where it's unsafe or impractical to stop
- when safely parked
- when making a contactless payment in a vehicle that is not moving, for example at a drive-through restaurant
- when using the device to park your vehicle remotely.

7

Speed limiters

Despite the UK's departure from the European Union (EU), an EU law regarding speed limiters has also been introduced to the UK. Speed limiters are safety devices fitted to vehicles to prevent them from exceeding pre-set speed limits. Since July 2022, it's become mandatory that all new cars are fitted with speed limiters or Intelligent Speed Assistance Systems (ISA).

The technology uses sign-reading cameras and digital maps of speed limit data to reduce engine torque and keep the vehicle within the current speed limit. The European Transport Safety Council believes that this could reduce collisions by 30% and deaths by 20%³. Furthermore, fewer collisions could lead to lower motor insurance premiums.

However, having a speed limiter fitted to a vehicle doesn't automatically mean you won't receive a fine if you're caught speeding; the driver remains responsible for adhering to the speed limit.

Having a speed limiter fitted to your vehicle does not mean you're exempt from a fine if caught speeding.



8

Transporting goods to, through or within Europe

This change, which came into effect in May 2022, affects operators and drivers of cars, vans and other light good vehicles transporting goods in the EU as well as Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland. Any vehicle between 2.5 tonnes and 3.5 tonnes that conducts cross-border activity for 'hire or reward' will need to obtain a standard international goods vehicle operator licence. Company owners should check whether this affects their fleets and if so, will need to add the relevant LGVs to their goods vehicle operator licence or, where this doesn't exist, obtain a new one.

The [government website](#) hosts further information along with a [step-by-step guide to driving abroad](#).

You can also read our [previous update on Driving Abroad](#).

Summary

Safety is the top priority for all road users and remaining familiar with the latest rules and guidance is an essential part of that. It's important for employers and fleet owners to remain up-to-date with the latest driving requirements and how these could affect their business operations and insurance. Company driving policies, training briefings and safe driving programmes are all effective methods to ensure company drivers are aware of their responsibilities and abide by the latest regulation to keep themselves and others safe on our roads.



Suggested further reading:

You can [register](#) for updates and changes to the Highway Code to ensure you and your drivers are always familiar with the latest information.

Sources:

¹ iHighway Code: 61% of drivers HAVE NOT read new rules, AA survey suggests | road.cc

² RAC. The RAC report on motoring 2020

³ Intelligent Speed Assistance (ISA) | ETSC