

DRIVING BUSINESS BACK TO WORK - SAFELY AND PROFITABLY



#IAMMOVINGFORWARD

#DRIVINGBACKTOBUSINESS

iam
RoadSmart

Introduction

IAM RoadSmart, the UK's largest independent road safety charity, has been living up to its reputation for creating better drivers and riders to improve road safety, for over 60 years.

Never before however - as the world emerges from the COVID-19 pandemic which brought widespread disruption to everyday life and the economy - have its skills and experience proved more relevant.

As business drivers return to the roads, as organisations grapple with the complexities of life post-lockdown and as attempts are made to re-boot the economy, the experience of IAM RoadSmart is proving more vital than ever.

In this guide we consult leading experts - including IAM RoadSmart's own - on best practice for getting companies, drivers, fleet managers and vehicles back on track. We examine the obstacles - including those faced in the delivery, grey fleet, company car and logistics arenas - and suggest practical solutions.

"This is a hugely challenging time for people returning to work, including those who have been furloughed, those who have been carrying the extra load to make up for those not at work and for employers too," says Tony Greenidge, IAM RoadSmart Interim Chief Executive Officer.

"Unimagined new pressures are being experienced by those commuting by car for the first time after switching from public transport because they fear for their safety amid the COVID-19 outbreak, following government advice to use public transport for essential journeys only. We do not yet know how this will affect congestion levels. There are concerns for fleet managers over vehicles, over how to ensure employees keep safe when sharing cars or meeting people, and with drivers who have lost confidence or are understandably under new stresses and strains.

"Businesses are facing really tough times as they try to get going again in the face of recession. The good news is that those who adapt and make the best decisions on vital issues including transport now, will be best placed to weather the storms.

"We, at IAM RoadSmart, are here to help as life - slowly - returns to normal."

“ THE GOOD NEWS IS THAT THOSE WHO ADAPT AND MAKE THE BEST DECISIONS ON VITAL ISSUES INCLUDING TRANSPORT NOW, WILL BE BEST PLACED TO WEATHER THE STORMS. ”
TONY GREENIDGE, INTERIM CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, IAM ROADSMART.



How lockdown affected us all

Prime Minister Boris Johnson made an unprecedented address to the nation at 8.30pm on Monday March 23, announcing new emergency measures putting the UK into lockdown. Not until May did restrictions begin to ease and then only incrementally. Lockdown resulted in the immediate disruption of life as we knew it, banning meetings of more than two people from different households, closing hospitality and gym venues, massively impacting on travel, deliveries and logistics. Roads - and vehicles - fell silent nationwide.

- Department for Transport Statistics¹ reveal a near-instantaneous drop in traffic levels for cars, light commercial vehicles and heavy goods vehicles - mirrored by dramatic falls in the use of public transport. By early April, reported the Guardian², Britain was at a near standstill, with road travel falling by up to 73%, to levels not seen since 1955.
- By April 3 figures revealed a slightly upward trend with traffic down only 63% - equivalent to 1962. It was not all doom and gloom. There were still big drops in roadside air pollution and quieter roads encouraged wildlife to venture into some towns and onto roads.
- On March 27 the Guardian reported drops in tiny particle pollution of a third to a half in London, Birmingham, Bristol and Cardiff, falls of about quarter in Manchester, York and Belfast³. For nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) pollution, the data - from Professor James Lee at York University and the National Centre for Atmospheric Science - showed declines of a third to a half in London, Birmingham, Bristol and Cardiff, and drops of 10-20% in the other cities.

Other effects were less welcome.

Increased risk in a strange new world

New dangers soon emerged. By April 22 the BBC reported⁴ that some motorists had taken advantage of quieter roads to travel at more than double the speed limit. One driver was recorded at 134mph in a 40mph limit in London, another clocked at 115mph on a 40mph road in Greater Manchester, revealing just one of many new risks that all road-users now faced. Police in Scotland said it was “astonishing” to see people behave so recklessly.

- In the Netherlands early research from VIA Traffic Solutions Software⁵ suggested that despite fewer collisions as traffic levels fell, there was an increase in the number of victims per incident. It concluded: “Less accidents, yet increased unsafety on the road.” Detailed comparable analysis of road traffic incidents in the UK is STILL awaited.
- In July, it was reported that car collisions were increasing rapidly as lockdown eased and drivers returned to the road. Early on in lockdown, the data revealed an 81% drop in collisions during the first two weeks of April compared to the first two weeks of March prior to restrictions being imposed, said accident aftercare and vehicle management technologies specialist, AX. However, incidents rose by 72% in May compared to April, a “considerable increase even before lockdown was significantly eased following the Prime Minister’s speech on 10 May” said the firm. The research covered thousands of non-fault incidents, where a third party was at fault. The type of incidents UK motorists were involved in also changed, with four in 10 non-fault collisions in April due to hitting parked cars – the first time this type of incident has represented over 40% of all collisions recorded.⁶
- Research by Hyundai, which surveyed 2,000 motorists, raised alarm signals for those returning to work. It found that one fifth had ‘struggled’ to get to grips with driving again after being off the road during lockdown. Almost half (48%) said they feared that the standard of road users’ driving would be worse as restrictions began to lift.
- Adding to the worries, research by KwikFit (reported by Fleet News⁷) showed that almost 1.1 million unroadworthy vehicles were set to return to the roads as lockdown began to ease. It estimated that 1,096,000 vehicles which would have received a six-month MOT extension, and would have failed a test with dangerous or major defects had they undergone an MOT. Of these unroadworthy vehicles, it was estimated that some 316,000 would have dangerous defects, while the remaining 780,000 vehicles would fail with major defects.



“IT IS CLEAR WE ARE FACING A NEW WORLD AS WE GET BACK ON TRACK; UNFORTUNATELY THERE IS A HIGH ELEMENT OF RISK ON MANY FRONTS.”
TONY GREENIDGE, INTERIM CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, IAM ROADSMART





“DRIVERS HAVE BEEN GETTING RUSTY; I CAN COUNT THE NUMBER OF TIMES I’VE BEEN OUT IN A CAR IN THE PAST 10 WEEKS ON THE FINGERS OF ONE HAND AND IT HAS FELT ODD. I HAVE FELT APPREHENSIVE.”

NEIL GREIG, DIRECTOR OF POLICY AND RESEARCH, IAM ROADSMART

Calls for change

There was little wonder - as reported by SmartTransport⁸ - that a majority of employees wanted radical changes to the way they work once lockdown lifted. Research by Hitachi Capital UK shows that two-fifths of workers are considering greener commuting alternatives post-lockdown, with over a quarter (26%) more likely to buy an electric car than they were before the pandemic. The study of over 1,800 UK adults found that 41% cited the time and cost savings of ditching the daily commute as the main reason home working was more attractive. Flexibility of working from home was identified as the most significant benefit by 13% of respondents.

“Even the immediate future is still unknown as we are in a fast-changing landscape,” says Neil Greig, IAM RoadSmart Director of Policy and Research. “Already however we are seeing changes; high streets that people were used to driving down suddenly have cycle lanes and we’re starting to hear of difficulties with deliveries as a result. More of this will emerge as we return to work. What business leaders can do now, however, is plan ahead so that Britain is prepared for changes as they occur.

“With journey planning it’s going to be the detail; which road is closed off? What does that new section of cycle track mean for getting that one particular van to a shop? Nobody sets off thinking they are going to have a crash but if you do have a crash you will suddenly have to interact with other people. It’s a really big reason to make sure you don’t break down and don’t have a crash. You just don’t know who’s going to come to your aid and all your plans for a clean vehicle and PPE could go out the window. Safe driving has never been more important on the corporate agenda.”

IAM RoadSmart fears that the financial status of many organisations means some will cut corners, taking risks with vehicle maintenance. Many will attempt to extend the life of their fleets, adversely affecting safety.

“Where somebody should be driving a three or four-year-old vehicle, they might find themselves driving an older one with all the additional implications in terms of greater wear and tear,” says Tony Greenidge. “People may be making knee-jerk reactions thinking they’re going to save money but end up spending far more in the long run. If you have an older van and it breaks down twice, and the cost of it off-road is £700 a day you’ve cost your business £1,400. Replacing that vehicle might have been much more cost-effective.”

Working harder and longer

Other increased risks include higher levels of stress and fatigue as a diminished pool of workers struggling to carry the workload of those furloughed or who have lost their jobs - and the tendency for some firms to turn away from training, in an ill thought-out attempt to reduce overheads.

“Some people may feel compelled to work harder and longer because they fear the loss of their job and redundancy,” says Tony. “Others will be making the transition to a car from public transport because they have fears about safety, and are commuting by car for the first time in years. That is a big area of concern.”

Adds Neil Greig: “There has been much media coverage of firms likely to do well in the recovery; those for instance who kept in touch with their client base by doing things for the community. This is underlined by ‘touchy-feely’ media advertising about life heading back towards normal. But if your drivers go back to work and project the wrong image, all that good could be undone. Now is the time to maintain that momentum - and to be seen as a caring company.”

Rebecca Ashton, IAM RoadSmart’s Head of Policy and Research, observes: “This is the strangest upheaval people have ever experienced. COVID-19 is a silent and invisible enemy. It has introduced a whole new level of concern and worries for people; it is important that employees - and their bosses - know how to deal with this. Fortunately, we at IAM RoadSmart can help.”



How should employers and drivers handle exit from lockdown?

Official Government advice on dealing with COVID-19

The Government issued guidance entitled 'Working safely during COVID-19 in or from a vehicle'⁹. Aimed at employers, employees and the self-employed, including couriers, mobile workers, lorry drivers, on-site transit and work vehicles, field forces and similar, it runs to 28 detailed pages.

Crucially, it reminds employers that they have a 'legal responsibility to protect workers and others from risk to their health and safety' and covers risk assessment, while urging employers to listen and talk to workers about how they will manage risks from COVID-19.

The advice ranges from the practical - hand-washing, maintaining social distance, use of screens, enabling people to work at home where practicable, staggering arrival and departure times at work - to enabling workers to access welfare facilities.

The advice acknowledges that in some cases multiple-occupancy of vehicles will be unavoidable, stressing the need for a 'fixed pairing system if people have to work in close proximity' and advising 'mitigation' measures such as extra ventilation. There is clear advice on sanitising vehicles.

There is separate, specific cleaning guidance on dealing with known/suspected cases of COVID-19¹⁰. Guidance on Personal Protective Equipment is included, as are shift patterns and working in groups. The guide contains useful links to additional support for employers and employees.

The Health and Safety Executive also produced guidance on driver welfare and hours of work¹¹.

Losing the furlough safety net

“A company that is about to lose the furlough safety net may well expect an employee back in, right at the deep-end. Along with possible increased travelling at work is likely to come increased workload; more calls, deliveries and paperwork,” says Richard. “Social distancing when you arrive at a destination is going to put more strain on drivers. PPE rules will impose a strain and for delivery drivers with a partner, wearing masks all day is a challenge. Delivery companies have already been working to a greater capacity with ‘non-essential’ shops being off limits. Traffic may also increase due to reluctance to use public transport too. Time will tell.”

Richard says that for commuters who decide to travel by car or motorcycle the confusion of finding parking, while negotiating congestion charges - possibly increased congestion itself - and bus lanes will add to the stress people feel.

Road maintenance - including the trimming of summer foliage that obstructs vital road signs - will be behind schedule, increased cycle and pedestrian activity will pose problems while social distancing in towns will be another risk as people step into the road to avoid physical contact. Pedestrians, cyclists and families will be ‘claiming’ roads once the domain of motor vehicles.

“Our advice for employees and employers is to start the journey back to normality slowly, making sure your own vehicle - or a company vehicle - is checked over thoroughly before you resume using it,” advises Richard. “You should take time to recover your judgement slowly and remember that other road users too may be struggling to adapt to a new situation.”

Richard adds (see his detailed advice below under ‘Journey Planning’): “Be co-operative and help each other out; you may just make a real difference to the person you let out of a junction or the pedestrian you allow to cross the road. Avoid making or receiving calls; obviously hand-held would be illegal but even hands-free calls are a great distraction and you need to concentrate.

“Importantly, consider completing an online risk assessment as a driver or a return-to-driving module - benefiting from simple reminders about how life is different post-COVID-19.”

Training

It is on the training front that IAM RoadSmart particularly excels - and where its expertise can help organisations adjust more rapidly to the ‘new normal’.

“If you’re worried about your drivers at the moment we certainly can help with refresher-type courses, giving invaluable feedback enabling you to interact with your workforce and have a conversation,” says Neil Greig. “Online is now well established and people are looking at this again. It’s a good way to keep fresh.”

“THIS IS A REALLY GOOD TIME TO INVEST IN THOSE TRAINING UPGRADES OR RENEWING PEOPLE’S TRAINING AWARENESS OF CERTAIN ISSUES. IT’S A PERFECT TIME TO FOCUS ON THAT. IT HELPS KEEP PEOPLE INVOLVED AND TO FEEL THAT THEY ARE GETTING SOMETHING USEFUL OUT OF THEIR TIME ON FURLOUGH. IT COULD HELP WITH SELF-ESTEEM AND MORALE. INVESTING IN TRAINING IS ESSENTIAL.”

**TOBY POSTON,
DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS, BVRLA.**



IAM RoadSmart's experts always on hand to help

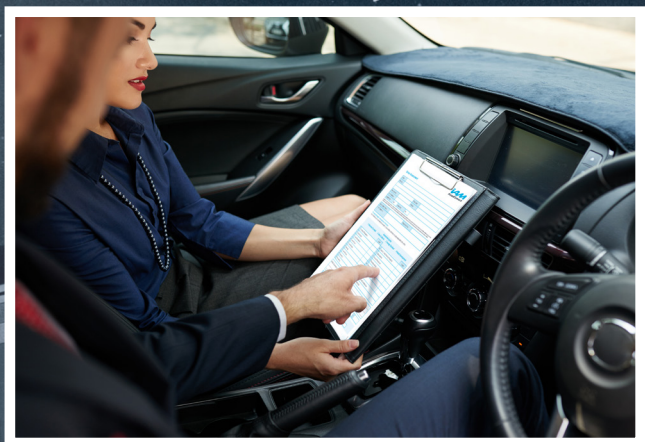
IAM RoadSmart has been training advanced drivers since 1956 including in the corporate arena for over 30 years. "The quality of the courses we deliver is unsurpassed," says Tony Greenidge. "The feedback we get from drivers is consistently positive."

"We have a renowned range of experts for practical issues - ranging from training and monitoring of drivers - to psychological care and wellbeing," says Neil Greig. "We provide a holistic service built on hard-won experience of dealing with industry and fleets over many years."

A key member of the team is Richard Gladman, IAM RoadSmart's Head of Driving and Riding Standards and a former police officer with over 30 years of road safety experience.

"A key issue post-lockdown is 'rusty' drivers," says Richard. "I have never had such a prolonged period where I have not driven other than a couple of miles to a shop and many are in the same predicament."

Company expectations may have changed too, as firms have struggled to survive, he says. They may be expecting more 'bang for their buck' from employees, adding to at-work pressures.



CHOICES for business

In April, IAM RoadSmart launched a programme of e-learning options for businesses to ensure that fleet drivers and employees who drive for work are kept up-to-date with the latest legislation.

With the Government encouraging businesses to provide training to employees on furlough, interest in online training solutions has been increasing. IAM RoadSmart's e-learning platform, CHOICES², provides drivers who may be off the road the opportunity to test their knowledge, learn new skills and advanced driving techniques.

In a new addition to the platform, companies can undertake licence checking via a fully integrated link with LicenceCheck's award-winning DAVIS (Driver and Vehicle Information Solution) system. The platform benefits from a comprehensive scoring system that allows users to readily analyse driver risk trends.

CHOICES includes interactive learning options and audited assessments for drivers on subjects such as distraction, hazard perception and managing speed. It provides a practical solution for companies wanting to undertake a fleet policy review, introduce improvements and have an auditable record of drivers who have confirmed that they have read and understood any policy changes.

"CHOICES offers employers complete flexibility, so they can tailor content to their own requirements and provide the training options best suited to their teams, whether they be a van, car or grey fleet driver," says Tony Greenidge. "We can adapt to organisations' needs immediately, and even share video content on issues that affect them, via the portal, within hours.

"Our scheme bridges the gap between organisations that do nothing, and those who fear lifting the lid on that particular issue is going to cost a lot of money. As many businesses are facing tough times, we offer a solution where they can spread the cost of the driver risk management over 12 months. When you consider that the average cost of a car for an employee might be £500-£600 a month with fuel and other costs, you could have a driver risk management programme for just £4 a month."

Wigan-based Link Contracting, whose company was one of the first to use CHOICES, says the programme proved invaluable during and after the pandemic. Before lockdown, it found that CHOICES had delivered savings on insurance and fleet costs and, impressively, 50% fewer collisions.

During lockdown, says Simon Jones, Head of Health and Safety at Link Contracting - which continued to support clients in the critical key sectors of healthcare and food retail - the firm found itself able to efficiently develop safe systems of work.

"Our risk-based approach and thinking enabled us to adapt quite quickly and start to look at new safe ways of working that would enable us to operate in this newly unique environment," says Simon. "Our proactive stance and ability to better assess and manage risk gives us reassurance that what we are doing is safe for our people, our clients and the places in which we work. IAM RoadSmart have been and will continue to be a big part of this for a long time to come."

“THERE IS A GENERAL VIEW THAT TRAINING ONLINE - THOUGH HIGHLY EFFECTIVE - IS NOT QUITE AS EFFECTIVE AS ON-ROAD. BUT ON-ROAD TRAINING WAS OFTEN TARGETED AT THAT TINY MINORITY WHO DID NOT RESPOND TO ONLINE TRAINING. IT'S AN 'ESCALATION' THING. WHEN PEOPLE JOIN IAM ROADSMART WE PROVIDE ONLINE MENTORING FOR THEM, AND ONLINE CHECKING. LOCKDOWN HAS GIVEN THIS AN EVEN SHARPER PROFILE, IT IS THE WAY FORWARD.”

NEIL GREIG



Fuel, insurance and maintenance savings

To support clients during the lockdown, IAM RoadSmart is offering all new CHOICES subscribers the opportunity to upgrade their account to include the creation of a bespoke fleet policy module.

Adds Tony Greenidge: "By proactively using this downtime, businesses can ensure their drivers have improved the knowledge and skills they need to drive safely when they get back on the road. With company finances likely to be stretched in the short to medium term, they can also benefit from savings on insurance, vehicle repair and fuel consumption."

"Sometimes we say 'Give us your worst driver - the one that keeps you awake at night - and we'll train that one first,' because often, that individual becomes your best advocate. They come back and say, 'Do you know what? That was pretty good.' We do that because we have the utmost confidence in our courses. The work that goes into our course preparation, the guidance we give to trainers in terms of how to deliver, the quality assessment of our personnel means they're all delivering the exact same high standards."

Treading - and driving - lightly

Lockdown has seen a greater emphasis on walking and cycling - and the environment. Roads in towns and cities have even been partitioned off, squeezing traffic while giving pedestrians more space to socially distance.

"What we do in Advanced Driving and Eco-driving¹³ training is going to become a way for companies to get a quick win in terms of their bottom line while also helping protect the environment," says Neil Greig. "Everyone is tempted to cut training as the first thing but it's a false economy. This is a great opportunity to assess drivers' skills and get them to think about things like more economical driving.

"People have started to like the cleaner air and quieter roads. The idea that we can go back to rampaging around, far too fast, is changing. There has been a sea change. Companies need to know that there will be more people with green awareness and they will be able to reflect that in their training of drivers - it will also help their bottom line."

**NEW RESEARCH BY
ONLINE PARKING PORTAL
YOURPARKINGSPACE.
CO.UK FOUND THAT 4-IN-10
PEOPLE WERE MORE LIKELY
TO PURCHASE AN EV AS
A DIRECT RESULT OF THE
LOCKDOWN WHICH HAS
SEEN FEWER VEHICLES ON
THE ROAD, RESULTING IN
LESS POLLUTION.**

Mental health

Lockdown has not just had an impact on driving skills, it's created new psychological pressures too - on drivers, employers and fleet managers.

"People are excited about getting back to work but anxious too," says Rebecca Ashton. "What's going to be expected of them, will they be fully aware of all the new rules and regs; how will others interpret the rules?"

Rebecca says bosses will be under additional pressure to get companies up and running again and to ensure their company's survival. Fleet managers will be under extra pressure if vehicles haven't been moved for weeks; there will be extra vehicle checks that have to be done too.

"An open dialogue in this situation is hugely important," says Rebecca. "Drivers should not hesitate to tell their fleet manager about any concerns. As for fleet managers; if you're getting lots of emails on the same issue, consider putting out an FAQ. After the 10th time an issue has been raised you might otherwise find yourself being a little short with the answer if you reply individually! Understand that everyone is concerned not just about their own safety but about their families' safety too. Care and compassion are important.

"Managers need to look out for signs of stress (see below) and to understand the symptoms and problems that go along with that," says Rebecca. "If your drivers aren't sleeping properly, if their eating patterns have changed, if they're finding it difficult to concentrate, you need to be on top of that."

Rebecca says employees and employers should work together closely to address any problems. "It should be a combined effort to make things better; that way the employer will relieve a certain amount of stress on the employee because they will feel they have been involved in their plan to help them. There's nothing worse than being kept in the dark."

She adds: "The key thing is to talk; mental health is something people often won't talk about but stress is not something you should hide. People should take this seriously and certainly not laugh concerns off. The worst thing anyone can do is say 'don't be so stupid!'"



“**MENTAL HEALTH IS SOMETHING PEOPLE OFTEN WON'T TALK ABOUT BUT STRESS IS NOT SOMETHING YOU SHOULD HIDE.**”
**REBECCA ASHTON,
HEAD OF POLICY
& RESEARCH,
IAM ROADSMART**



Frustration and anger

Dr Lisa Dorn, Director of Research and Development at DriverMetrics, warns that some drivers will feel less confident about their ability behind the wheel post-lockdown.

She says drivers may also find that they are under an increased workload as they deal with a backlog of work. "When humans are subjected to stressors such as time pressure, they tend to show a variety of physiological responses," she says. Pupil dilation, increased heart rate, slowed digestion and a constriction of blood vessels are physiological mechanisms collectively known as the 'fight-or-flight' response.

"Time pressure is known to lead to higher speeds and the direct consequence of driving faster is that a higher amount of information has to be processed per unit of time," says Dr Dorn. Driving too fast has a direct influence on the amount of information available for the senses to process as well as indirect psychological influences. "For example, having to complete a journey in a shorter amount of time leads to high mental workload, anxiety, frustration, and anger, which in turn reduces information processing efficiency while driving."

There are also perceptual implications for how drivers use their eyes; research shows that visual and cognitive 'tunnelling' occurs, says Dr Dorn. "A stressed driver is less likely to carry out mirror checks and process the cues that are most immediate and familiar rather than actively searching for hazards."

Dr Dorn's strategies to try to improve safety as you come out of lockdown:

- If possible ask an experienced driver - from your household - to accompany you on your first journey to build up your confidence.
- Set yourself achievable targets.
- Take breaks when under pressure, especially on long journeys.
- Plan the route to avoid roadworks and heavy traffic when possible.
- Plan extra time for possible delays into the schedule when possible.
- Call ahead to let others know you are running late as this reduces stress.



Fatigue

"We are in unprecedented times," says Rebecca Ashton, who urges employers and fleet managers to be on the look-out for signs of undue fatigue in the workforce. "Because people are under a certain amount of stress this can impact on sleeping patterns, eating patterns and give them difficulty in concentrating. Perhaps they're having an extra drink at night which they perhaps shouldn't be doing. Other people might be on prescription drugs because of stress; there's a lot of fear and anxiety which can be overwhelming. Employers must be vigilant - and act on what they see quickly."

Vehicles

Tim Shallcross, IAM RoadSmart's Head of Technical Policy and Advice, says that those returning to vehicles that have lain dormant during lockdown should imagine they're thinking of buying the vehicle. "What would you want to check in those circumstances?" he asks.

- Drivers should start planning ahead at least the day before they need the vehicle.
- Confirm that oil, coolant and windscreen washer fluids and tyres are as they should be – including the spare tyre.
- Wash all windows – months of dust won't help vision.
- Start the engine; don't worry if it makes strange noises as long as they disappear after a few seconds. After two months, oil will have drained off components but it will soon circulate once the engine starts.
- If the battery is flat, charge it for at least four hours. If you don't have a charger, follow the safe procedure for jump-starting. If you're unsure, call a breakdown service.
- Once started, ensure no warning lights stay on. Then turn on all the lights to ensure no bulbs have blown.
- Take the car for a short test drive, listen for unusual noises and make sure it feels 'right'.
- The first time you touch the brakes, there may be a grating noise caused by surface rust on the brake discs. That's fine as long as it goes after a couple of brake applications.
- If you left the park brake (handbrake) on during lockdown, it might have stuck. If the car's reluctant to move initially, try putting it in reverse to see if that frees the wheels. If not, call for technical help.
- If you haven't managed to check tyre pressures at home, visit the nearest garage to do so. Wear gloves while using the air pump and handling the fuel nozzle if you need to fill up.
- Forecourts often have disposable gloves for the diesel pump but they may have run out, so take your own.

A problem shared...

- Before car-sharing, ask all other potential occupants if they or their lockdown partners have had any COVID-19 symptoms and follow government advice.
- It's advisable that all occupants wear face masks to minimise the risk of infecting one another. Gloves are a good idea.
- Weather permitting, open windows will help disperse any virus, but even in bad weather, ensure the heater is on the fresh air setting, not recirculating.
- Rental companies should disinfect vehicles before issue but use antibacterial wipes on steering wheel and all controls, including seat adjustment, mirrors, seat belt and keys.

"Companies have a legal responsibility to ensure vehicles provided for employees are maintained properly," says Tim. "Proper maintenance means being serviced at a workshop by suitably qualified staff in line with the vehicle manufacturer's service schedule. Delaying regular servicing increases the risk of premature wear and a poor service history will reduce residual values. If a company vehicle crashes or causes injury, the police will check the mechanical condition and can ask to see the service history. Poor, or delayed servicing can lead to serious fines for the company."

Companies also have a duty to make sure the employee checks that the vehicle is roadworthy, says Tim. This means managers and HR departments stipulating that the employee carries out regular checks of lights, tyres, fluid levels and reports any mechanical defects immediately.

What are the ramifications of the MOT exemption?

Under health and safety law, says Tim, employers have the same duty of care to staff who drive their own vehicles for work as they do to staff who drive company vehicles. Employers should specify that vehicles used on company business must be in sound mechanical condition and roadworthy. They should be maintained according to the manufacturer's service schedule (not necessarily at a main dealer, but it must be a qualified garage using authorised parts).

If an MOT has run out, the vehicle should be taken for test at the earliest opportunity even if eligible for the extension, not delayed for the full six months. Compile a list of local MOT garages – most are open. Ideally, specify that the car should be tested before a return to use for work, but if that's not possible, allow a maximum of, say, two weeks for the test after return to work.



TIM SHALLCROSS, HEAD OF TECHNICAL POLICY, IAM ROADSMART



**RICHARD GLADMAN,
HEAD OF DRIVING &
RIDING STANDARDS,
IAM ROADSMART**



Journey planning

A key COVID-19 difficulty facing drivers is stress caused by journey-planning difficulties. "It's not just unexpected closure of roads and facilities, but also the stress that this causes when people think they are going to be late," says Richard Gladman "But there are things you can do."

Richard Gladman's journey-planning checklist:

- Plan your journey well ahead of time and plan to be as self-sufficient if possible.
- Secure your phone out of sight so you're not tempted to engage in a conversation - even hands-free.
- Give other drivers plenty of space as their judgement may have deteriorated over weeks of inactivity.
- Help others out by being courteous where you can.
- Consider others when planning stops; a beauty spot may be your usual place but it is likely to be excessively busy with people released from lockdown.
- Consider how your 'normality' has changed: are you drinking on a 'school night'; out of sync after late nights/leisurely breakfasts when a commute wasn't required?
- Do not expect your staff to be at 100% straight away; let performance build rather than forcing it to breaking point.
- Consider IAM RoadSmart's CHOICES driver risk assessment modules (see above) to help with driver attitude - other modules cover specific areas including drink/drugs/distraction.
- Consider completing an online risk assessment as a driver or a Return to Driving module - simple reminders about how life is slightly different post-COVID-19.

Not open for business

Planning long journeys may be difficult as facilities will be limited, so Richard urges drivers to prepare with careful route-planning, by packing snacks and fluids and filling up with fuel/screen wash at familiar, local sites. He adds: "If you have a passenger or co-worker, avoid sharing. Carry hand wipes or sanitiser and if you do have to stop for fuel use disposable gloves at the pumps."

The Road Haulage Association has more experience of journey-planning than most, and drivers can consult its RoadwayLive app¹⁴. "Our app reports the latest problems we know about and we continue to protest where cycle lanes are put in place without due consultation and planning," says Rod McKenzie, RHA Managing Director of Policy & Public Affairs. "We vigorously oppose restricted road space for business and the essential road users that logistics operators need."

Adds Rod: "Common sense is needed; can you avoid travelling at peak times to avoid the jams? My personal favourite is to travel early - then leave early."

As for workers being persuaded into situations they are not comfortable within the new normal? "Don't do what you are not comfortable with," insists Rod. "Discuss with your line manager. Your health comes first and you should raise objections if you feel they are relevant."

Conclusion

IAM RoadSmart believes that acting now - as lockdown gradually eases - will enable organisations large and small to lay the foundations for a swifter, safer, greener, more profitable recovery.

“The landscape has changed massively with the pandemic,” says Tony Greenidge. “There are certainly more challenges but those who thrive in the long run will be those who see this moment - a moment when we have had to take stock - not merely as a hurdle, but an opportunity. An opportunity to re-think tired old practices, old ways of doing things that can be improved. And that includes companies’ driving workforces.”

In few places will these new opportunities be more important than in the world of business, as Britain moves towards economic recovery. But it is also in the business arena that those who fail to take the right steps will pay a particularly heavy price.

Our previous IAM RoadSmart whitepaper ‘Driving while distracted - challenges and solutions’ - reported that despite the best efforts of ministers, police and safety organisations, an estimated one third of road deaths in Britain still involve someone on a journey for work purposes. Each day, more than 150 vehicles driven on business are involved in a collision resulting in injury.

This is why IAM RoadSmart is keen to underline the ongoing value of training in the business arena - whether online or on-road - today. “Having discovered working from home, many people may even drive less in the future - but no matter whether you cover 5,000 or 25,000 miles a year you are still exposed to risk,” says Tony. “That is what IAM RoadSmart - as the UK’s largest independent road safety charity - wants to act on.

“With our high quality, highly flexible CHOICES programme, we aim to help our partners drive into the future safely, confidently and with the peace of mind that they have made a sound business decision.

“In the past two or three months we have all seen that sense of community come back. Maybe that should now extend to driving more safely and more efficiently. People are thinking they can give something back to the wider community through minimising the impact they are having on society and the environment. IAM RoadSmart is ready to help them on that journey.”

READ MORE INSIGHTS

For further industry insights and free road safety resources visit iamroadsmart.com/business

TRY OUR FREE E-LEARNING MODULE

Our new ‘Return to Driving’ e-learning module includes tips and advice on getting safely back on the road following the COVID-19 lockdown. Visit iamroadsmart.com/return-to-driving-module

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Stay up-to-date with our latest news and tips from our experts. Follow IAM RoadSmart on LinkedIn. See linkedin.com/company/iamroadsmart

GET IN TOUCH

To discuss your driver training requirements, or to arrange a demonstration of our CHOICES e-learning platform contact us at:

0870 120 2910
business@iam.org.uk

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0870 120 2910

business@iam.org.uk