

# Driving in the dark advice for drivers

**In the late Autumn and as we approach the winter months, many drivers who feel uneasy driving in the dark start to feel anxious behind the wheel. Below you will find some great hints and tips to make driving at night feel less stressful.**

## **Be safe be seen**

Most vehicles now have an automatic setting for headlights so a car or van will automatically switch from daytime running lights to full headlights without the driver noticing, but many vehicles don't have this function so it is important to remember to switch on in low light, or in low visibility.

It is illegal to drive at night without properly functioning front and rear lights, so before starting a journey drivers are advised to check that all lights are in working order. If a bulb has gone, it is an inexpensive fix at any garage or service centre and it may well save a possible fine. If the police notice a vehicle driving with only one headlight they will stop the driver. Drivers could then face being handed a fixed penalty notice fine of £100 and three points on their licence.

Using the vehicle's lights correctly is hugely important too. Drivers should only use the full beam function on roads that are unlit in order to see ahead in the darkness - switching back when any oncoming vehicle comes within sight. Dazzling another road user can be extremely dangerous. If this happens, drivers are advised to avoid looking directly at the lights of an oncoming vehicle, focus on the

left hand side of the road and use the road markings as a guide to keep their eyes focused. If the driver of the vehicle behind forgets to dip their lights, drivers should try moving the rear view mirror down to avoid the glares until the other vehicle has passed or has dipped their lights.

Fog can appear from nowhere and when combined with dark stretches of road can really impede a driver's vision. Fog lights used at the right time should make driving safer but using them at the wrong time could mean a driver is breaking the law and endangering other road users. Fog lights should only be used when visibility ahead is under 100m.

Fog is one of the most dangerous weather conditions. An accident involving one vehicle can quickly involve many others, especially if they are driving too close to one another.

## **Clean your screen**

Screens pick up all sorts of grime and dirt which can impair visibility. A build-up of condensation on the inside the cabin can also mean your screen needs cleaning more regularly.

When cleaning, it is important not use any products that will leave a residue, a microfibre cloth is ideal for this.

If a film has built up on the inside of the windscreen it is like driving using dirty glasses and can increase glare from oncoming lights.

## **Beware of vulnerable road users**

Cyclists can be difficult to spot in

the dark, especially if they're not wearing reflective clothing, so drivers need to be extra careful by keeping an eye on mirrors, especially whilst turning at junctions. Children are particularly at risk in the darker afternoons, drivers need to take extra care when passing school areas and near crossings keeping their speed down. Usually 20mph limits are also applicable in these areas.

## **Is your vision up-to-scratch**

When the light fades, many people start to realise they have a problem with their vision, drivers may find themselves straining harder to focus especially when attempting to read road signage - this is especially true if you find it difficult to read in low light. Some drivers turn to night-driving glasses but their tint could actually reduce visibility so be wary of this. The best thing to do is get your eyes tested to make sure you're wearing the correct glasses if required for driving at night.

Having poor eyesight means you may miss seeing and reacting to hazards putting yourself and other road users at greater risk - there is also a minimum eyesight requirement for all drivers.

If you're caught driving without the high enough standard of vision for driving, you could be prosecuted. More importantly you may well cause an accident.

In all road conditions maintaining your distance from the vehicle in front is vitally important and having good vision is essential, especially after dark



## **Don't drive tired and plan ahead**

Seasonal changes can affect sleep patterns, drivers must make sure they are not over-tired and so less able to concentrate out on the road. Driving tired is dangerous and can be as harmful as drink-driving!

Drivers should plan ahead and avoid putting themselves under too much pressure to reach a destination. Allow time for regular breaks and if you can stick to major routes which are more likely to be lit especially in the darker evenings.

## **In summary**

Above all it is about keeping safe out on the road and making sure you are prepared for all road conditions, driving in the dark will always still cause anxiety to some drivers but these helpful hints will make sure you are better prepared. Stick to familiar routes and take your time, above all stay safe this Winter.

