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Extreme heat likely to trigger big increase in number of breakdowns; drivers urged to keep safe

The imminent arrival of some extremely high temperatures is expected to lead to a huge increase in vehicle breakdowns across the UK – potentially over 1,000 more a day than is normal for mid-July – causing the RAC to urge drivers to be aware of the dangers of breaking down in the heat, and to plan accordingly.

Over this weekend, a rise in drivers seeking to cool off in coastal, lake and riverside locations risks leading to localised traffic queues, increasing the

likelihood of vehicles overheating and drivers calling for help. Into the early part of next week, the Met Office's red warning for temperatures rising even further – into the high-30s or even low-40s in places – only heightens the chances of drivers' vehicles falling victim to the heat and running into problems. The RAC forecasts the number of drivers needing help on Monday and Tuesday will be 15-20% higher than what's normal for mid-July – the equivalent of over 1,000 extra breakdowns a day.

But the risks of breaking down in the heat are severe which is why the RAC is urging drivers to be aware of the dangers and to carry an emergency breakdown kit with them should the worst happen – something that's particularly important if they are travelling with young, elderly or other vulnerable people. Having the means to keep cool and hydrated while waiting for help is vital.

Drivers can also reduce the chances of breaking down by making sure their cars are ready for the high temperatures. Ensuring oil and coolant levels are at the right levels is particularly important when the mercury rises, as is checking tyres are free of damage, have plenty of tread and are inflated to the right pressures.

RAC Breakdown spokesperson Rod Dennis said:

“With a rare red weather warning for extreme heat in force there's now every possibility a large than normal number of drivers will suffer breakdowns over the next few days. We anticipate there could be around 15-20% more breakdowns on Monday and Tuesday, which equates to more than 1,000 extra people needing help each day.

“Such a large increase in people needing assistance is bound to put pressure on all breakdown services, so it's essential drivers have an emergency kit with them to keep as safe as possible while they wait for help – ideally in a safe location in the shade. Carrying plenty of water, some non-perishable food, emergency medication if needed and a means of blocking out the sun – hats and an umbrella – are all important, as is a having a fully charged phone to be able to contact their breakdown provider or the emergency services if necessary.

“Our teams will be working tirelessly to rescue drivers who break down, but there is a lot drivers can do to avoid breaking down in the first place. This

starts with checking the coolant and oil levels under the bonnet when the engine is cold. Oil should be topped up if it's low, and if coolant isn't between the 'min' and 'max' levels then drivers should top it up – or take it to a reputable garage to get it checked without delay.

“Drivers in vehicles without effective air conditioning should consider delaying any non-essential journeys by car over the next few days until temperatures begin to fall and the Met Office's weather warning no longer applies, or use the car during the coolest parts of the day. This is particularly important advice for vulnerable people, including the very young and elderly, for whom the extremely high temperatures pose a clear health risk. We also want to remind drivers never to leave pets in a hot car, which can prove fatal.

“At these sorts of temperatures, melting roads are also likely – with blacker patches of tarmac being the most obvious sign. Drivers therefore shouldn't be surprised to see some gritting trucks out, as spreading a fine granite dust can help improve vehicle grip on softening road surfaces. Drivers also shouldn't be alarmed if they see water underneath their vehicles, which is normally just condensation coming from the air conditioning unit.”

Your emergency breakdown kit – what to pack should the worst happen

- Plenty of water for the driver and all passengers – consider carrying a camping-style water carrier so you've always got plenty with you
- Sufficient snacks that won't melt or go off in the heat – in a coolbox if you have one
- Hats and umbrellas to shield from the sun
- Sun block
- Emergency medication if needed
- A fully charged mobile phone – on smartphones, download and login to your breakdown service's app to reach help as quickly as possible (this can also help with precisely locating your vehicle easily)
- A means of keeping pets secure if you have to leave your car – and sufficient food and water for them

Further [advice to drivers on preparing for the heat](#) can be found on the RAC

website.

The press office email address is press.enquiries@rac.co.uk and media centre is at media.rac.co.uk. **Please note:** the press office is unable to help with individual customer enquiries - please visit the [RAC contacts page](#) to find the right contact.

About the RAC

The RAC, an iconic UK brand, provides complete peace of mind to 13 million UK private and business drivers, whatever their motoring needs. As well as its premium nationwide breakdown assistance service – with an expert branded patrol workforce attending more than two million breakdowns every year – it offers a wide range of market-leading products across insurance, legal services, vehicle inspections and service, maintenance and repair. The RAC is also at the forefront in helping drivers make the switch to electric vehicles and leads in the development of new solutions for businesses and OEMs, partnering with the best in the motoring and mobility space.

Visit the [RAC website](#).

Contacts



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