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Motorists confused about new MOT rules coming into force on Sunday

Changes being made to the MOT test which come into force this Sunday (20 May) are already causing confusion among motorists, new research from the RAC has found.

While the [new MOT test](#) will still produce a pass or fail outcome three new categories of fault types have been introduced: two of which result in a failed test – ‘dangerous’ and ‘major’ – and one which results in a pass – ‘minor’.

Of 1,866 motorists questioned by the RAC half (49%) appeared most confused by the new ‘minor’ fault category thinking that it would lead to an MOT fail when it is actually a ‘pass with defects’ that need to be remedied as soon as possible.

Perhaps more worryingly, 5% thought a vehicle found to have a ‘dangerous’ fault would pass the test and 6% believed the same of a ‘major’ fault – both are ‘fails’ and require immediate repairs, with a ‘dangerous’ fail having the additional ‘do not drive until repaired’ caveat.

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What's more, three-quarters of motorists (74%) believe the introduction of the new 'minor' category, in addition to the existing 'advisory' notification, will lead to drivers not addressing these faults with their vehicles. Furthermore, 13% felt a vehicle that was given an 'advisory' would result in a fail – this is surprising as MOT 'advisories' to monitor items for future repair have been in use for many years.

Overall, public awareness of the changes was reasonable with 44% of drivers saying they knew about them, and 56% saying they did not. Among those who said they were aware, 51% said they knew the date the changes took effect, but in reality, when questioned further, only 65% actually did.

Asked whether they thought there is a danger the new fault categories could be interpreted differently by test centres around the country, 74% of motorists believed they could be. However, six in 10 (59%) thought the changes in the new test would be likely to lead to more vehicles failing the MOT. Only 11% felt more vehicles would pass and 15% thought there would be no change in the rate of passes and fails.

The RAC is supportive of the changes, but is concerned there could be some inconsistency in the way they are interpreted and applied around the country. If this is the case the overall pass/fail rate may be affected which could lead to a significant change in the proportion of vehicles passing or failing.

When asked if there were to be significantly more vehicles passing the

updated MOT test than there were under the old system, six in 10 (58%) respondents said they would be concerned as this could mean there are more cars on the road that would have failed the old test and are therefore not as safe. A quarter (27%) had no such concerns, believing the updated test would be accurately applied and no unsafe cars would be passed.

Another of the key changes to the MOT test are stricter limits for emissions from diesel cars with a diesel particulate filter (DPF) which captures and stores exhaust soot. Vehicles will get a major fault if the MOT tester can see smoke of any colour coming from the exhaust or finds evidence that the DPF has been tampered with.

Half of motorists questioned (48%) in the RAC survey said they currently own, or run, a diesel car, and of those 53% said their car had a DPF. However, more than a third (37%) didn't know whether their vehicle had one or not.

Owners that find out at the time of their vehicle's MOT that the DPF needs replacing could be in for a very nasty surprise as new ones often cost in excess of £1,000. This would be a big shock for the 49% of diesel car drivers surveyed who thought one would cost between £250 and £500. Only 23% of respondents with diesel cars correctly realised tend to cost over £1,000 not including labour.

RAC spokesman Simon Williams said: "It is important everyone quickly gets to grips with the changes to the MOT, and that test centres and garages do a good job of explaining the new fault categories so motorists understand correctly the severity of faults with their vehicles.

"Changes to the MOT that make vehicles using our roads safer are undoubtedly a positive step so we hope that testers everywhere interpret and apply the new rules fairly and consistently. The last thing we want to see is a lowering of MOT standards and an increase in the number of unroadworthy vehicles on our roads.

"There is rightly a lot of attention at the moment on 'harmful to health' nitrogen dioxide emissions from diesel vehicles so stricter rules should help to make sure vehicles aren't emitting more than they should be. Those unlucky enough to discover their vehicle has a faulty or tampered with diesel particulate filter will, unfortunately for them, be burning a big hole in their pocket due to the very high cost of replacement.

“Drivers who have a diesel vehicle with a DPF should make sure it is regularly given a good run at motorway or dual carriageway speeds so the filter is automatically cleared of any clogged up soot. This is very important if the vehicle is predominantly used for short journeys on local roads.”

The RAC website has comprehensive guides to both the [MOT changes](#) and [diesel particulate filters](#).

Notes to Editors

About the RAC

First formed in 1897, the RAC has been looking after the needs of its members and championing the interests of motorists for more than 120 years.

Today it has more than eight million members and is one of the UK’s most progressive motoring organisations, providing services for both private and business motorists. Whether it’s [roadside assistance](#), [insurance](#), [buying a used car](#), [vehicle inspections and checks](#), [legal services](#) or up-to-the-minute [traffic and travel information](#) – the RAC offers a solution for all motoring needs. The RAC is committed to making motoring easier, safer, more affordable and more enjoyable for drivers and road users.

The RAC is the motorist’s champion and campaigns to support the interests of its members and UK motorists at a national level. This includes voicing concerns about the increasing cost of motoring, particularly the price of fuel and the high level of tax levied on it, advancing levels of road safety, and supporting the needs of all drivers, from young to old.

The RAC’s annual [Report on Motoring](#) – first published in 1989 – is one of a kind and provides a clear insight into the concerns and issues facing today’s motorists.

For the very latest news on UK fuel prices, check [RAC Fuel Watch](#). It provides a comprehensive guide to the latest UK unleaded petrol and diesel prices – both at the wholesale level and at the pump - and tracks these prices daily to help drivers check if the price they pay to fill up is a fair one.

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