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Jan 15, 2025 00:01 GMT

RAC fourth-quarter pothole breakdowns up by a fifth compared to previous three months

Pothole-related breakdowns jumped by a fifth (17%) in the final three months of 2024 compared to the previous quarter, a sign of the ongoing poor condition of Britain's roads, new breakdown data from the [RAC's Pothole Index](#) shows.*

RAC patrols went to the rescue of 4,709 drivers from October to December for damaged shock absorbers, broken suspension springs or distorted wheels –

the call-outs most likely to be caused by wear and tear from defective road surfaces. This was 669 more than the 4,040 recorded in the third quarter of 2024.

In the same winter period, almost four-in-10 breakdowns (39%) the RAC attended were a result of punctured tyres, due to potholes along with other factors like nails and screws.** This was the highest proportion of breakdowns caused by punctures in any quarter during 2024.

Sub-zero temperatures, along with water from rain, melted snow and ice are normally the cause of potholes as water freezes and expands in cracks in the roads. Although there were fewer frost days and nearly a third (28%) less rainfall than average in the fourth quarter of 2024, the number of pothole breakdowns still rose.***

The number of pothole breakdowns could increase even more in 2025 following the recent severe weather conditions, which last week meant the RAC had one of its busiest periods for breakdowns in the five years since the COVID pandemic.

Garage data analysed by the RAC shows that drivers can expect to pay an average of £460 if their car needs fixing after hitting a pothole, for anything more serious than a puncture.**** This is around 43% more than the average cost of pothole compensation claims paid out by councils to drivers in 2023 at £260 per claim, according to FOI data.*****

RAC Breakdown spokesperson Alice Simpson said: “The poor condition of Britain’s roads is by far and away drivers’ top concern, yet despite the mild weather our figures show there was no relief from the problem in the final quarter of 2024 – with our patrols attending more pothole-related breakdowns compared to three months earlier.

“In the aftermath of this month’s blast of snow and ice, we may see the unwelcome trend continue in 2025 as excess water freezes and expands in cracks on the roads. To prevent water-damaged roads in future, we urge local highways authorities to resurface those in the worst condition and surface dress other roads to stop them deteriorating further.

“Hopefully the Government funding announced before Christmas will go

some way towards literally filling in the cracks, giving road users smoother, safer surfaces. The £1.6bn allocated to pothole repairs is the biggest one-off road maintenance settlement councils in England have ever been given. What's especially positive is it comes with guidance to use the money wisely by carrying out preventative maintenance, which we hope stops more potholes appearing in the future.”

Notes to editors

*The [RAC Pothole Index](#) is a 12-month rolling measure of the share of pothole fault breakdowns compared to 2006, corrected for seasonal weather effects and improving longer term vehicle reliability Data has been collected by the RAC since 2006. Data deliberately excludes punctures as the source of these could be something unrelated to road standard (for instance, the presence of nails and screws)

**Data collected from the RAC's Pothole Index

***Met Office: [UK and regional climate change series](#) and [Monthly, seasonal and annual number of days in the month with air frost \(minimum temperature below zero\) for UK](#)

****According to [RAC garage data from December 2023](#)

*****Based on a Freedom of Information request about pothole compensation claims to 18 councils with the longest UK road networks in March 2024. The question asked was: What is the average sum that was paid out to drivers per claim?

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About the RAC

The RAC, an iconic UK brand, provides complete peace of mind to 14 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. Included in this is the first-of-its-kind nationwide Mobile Mechanics service which brings the garage to homes and workplaces.

At the forefront of new solutions for business fleets and consumers, the RAC's breakdown service is electric-ready with mobile EV charging technology and can be called on using [myRAC](#) – the all-in-one route planner, fuel finder and breakdown reporting app.

Visit the [RAC website](#).

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