

# Personal Safety On The Road

from GEM Motoring Assist

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# Personal safety on the road...



The Viscount Simon  
President, GEM Motoring Assist

||| We want you to feel safe and secure on all the journeys you make. The fears and vulnerabilities faced by people driving on their own in the UK are relatively low, compared with some parts of the world.

But there is often more pressure on us to drive longer and later, so it makes sense to plan the routes you take and the locations where you park, so that any risks to your safety are minimised.

Taking a few minutes to read and use the common sense advice in this leaflet will hopefully ensure you are never in a situation that is uncomfortable or dangerous. And if you ever find yourself threatened, make sure you call the police immediately. |||

# The 3 C's of personal safety...



## Consider

- Take responsibility for your personal safety and consider the actions you need to take to ensure you remain safe at all times.
- If you are faced with any situation of confrontation remain calm and avoid any actions that could be considered as aggressive or confrontational. Crossed arms, hands on hips, wagging finger, raised arms, loud speech could all be interpreted as aggressive behaviour.



## Confident

- Always be alert and confident when you are out.
- Be aware of your surroundings and of any situation that could involve danger.
- Remember, headphones or using a mobile phone etc. may make you less aware of your surroundings or any danger that may arise. This is particularly important when crossing roads as a pedestrian.
- Before any journey give some thought to the route you will be taking and whether any part of your journey could present a danger. Make adjustments if necessary even if this makes the trip a longer one.
- Try to let someone know where you are going, when you are likely to return and how long you will be out. Inform them if these arrangements change.



## Cautious

- Remain cautious of any offer to help you. Rely on your natural instinct to remain calm and alert to dangers.
- Remember to keep your mobile charged before any journey.

# Personal safety on the road...



## Think ahead

- Where possible travel by day on main, well used roads. Plan your route in advance and check that you have an up-to-date road map or Satellite Navigation System in the car so you won't need to ask for directions.
- If you have to travel after dark, tell someone your destination, your route and what time you expect to arrive. If your plans change, let them know.
- Take your mobile phone - and make sure that the battery is charged before you set off.
- Ensure your car is serviced regularly. Check petrol, oil, coolant-level and tyres, especially before a long journey.
- Join a national breakdown organisation. See the back of this leaflet for details of how to join GEM Motoring Assist Breakdown Cover.



## While driving

- Harassment or actual attacks are rare, but they do happen. Forethought can give you more confidence and minimise the risk.
- Keep the doors locked and the windows closed as much as possible, especially in built up areas and stop-go traffic or when travelling alone.
- Keep alert so you know where you are.
- Remember, tiredness kills. Take a break on long journeys.
- Never pick up hitch hikers.



## Personal possessions in your car

- Keep your doors locked.
- NEVER leave valuables, such as handbags or mobile phones on the passenger seat – they could be 'snatched' at traffic lights.
- Don't leave valuables in a parked car.



## Parking

- NEVER leave your car unlocked, even on a garage forecourt when you go to pay for petrol.
- NEVER leave your car unattended with the engine running, even on your own driveway – it only takes seconds for it to be stolen.
- Choose a safe place to park. Park in a well-lit area where there are people about, especially if you don't intend to return to your car until after dark.
- If possible, look for a car park that has been Park Mark awarded. Car parks that have the Park Mark are annually assessed by the police and meet rigorous standards regarding crime prevention and safety.  
For more information visit:  
[www.parkmark.co.uk](http://www.parkmark.co.uk)
- If you park in a multi-storey car park choose a space close to the exit and ramp and away from pillars. Reverse into position to give you a quick getaway. Park close to the attendant if there is one.
- Make sure you know exactly where you parked so you will not have difficulty finding your car.
- If you are a woman by yourself, try not to advertise the fact. Put spare shoes, bags etc. into the boot before leaving the car.
- Consider what you would do if your bag was stolen - keep your keys, money and mobile phone separately.
- Ask a friend or colleague to walk you to your car if you feel unsafe about your surroundings.
- When you return to your car, have your keys ready and check the back seat (use a torch at night) before you get in. Lock the doors and drive away without delay.



# Personal safety on the road...



## Dangerous Situations

- If you can see or become involved in an incident avoid getting involved in an argument with the other parties.
- If you are confronted with 'road rage' do not get out of the car; keep your windows up and your car locked.
- If your car starts to 'play up', stop in a busy, well-lit area. Get help immediately by calling your breakdown recovery operator or garage. (If you are not already a member, you can find information on joining GEM Motoring Assist Breakdown Cover at the back of this leaflet.) If you feel vulnerable and in need of special attention, inform the recovery helpline operator.
- NEVER give lifts to strangers. If you see an accident or another driver in difficulty do not stop. Telephone the Police as soon as possible and report what you have seen.
- If a car pulls up alongside or behind you and the occupants try to attract your attention it may be a genuine warning. However, keep your doors locked and drive to a busy place such as a service area or garage forecourt before stopping. Even then keep your doors locked until you are confident there is no danger.
- If someone in a car is deliberately trying to intimidate you, or if you think a car is following you, keep driving until you reach a busy, public place, such as a Police, Fire or Ambulance station, pub or garage forecourt.
- If a car travels alongside you at the same speed, slow down and allow them to pass. If the driver persists, drive to a busy, public place and use a public or mobile phone to call the Police.
- If a car pulls in front of you and forces you to stop, leave the engine running. If the driver, or passenger then gets out and approaches you, turn on your hazard lights, reverse as far as you can and sound your horn continuously, no matter what time it is.
- If the occupant of a car beside you at traffic lights or a junction tries to attract your attention simply ignore them. Don't make eye contact.



# Emergency checklist...



## Useful items to have with you in the car:

- It is worthwhile to have your driving licence with you whenever you drive. However, it is unwise to leave your licence in the car.
- Keep a note of your insurer's details and policy number to hand. DO NOT keep your vehicle registration document or insurance certificate in the vehicle.
- Mobile phone with fully charged battery (It is illegal to use a handheld phone whilst driving. We recommend that you do not make or receive any calls, even hands free, as this may distract your attention).
- Breakdown recovery details and telephone number.
- Up to date road atlas or Satellite Navigation System.
- Sunglasses/spare spectacles if appropriate.
- Cloth/chamois covered screen cleaner.
- Note book and pencil.
- Torch plus spare battery.
- Personal attack alarm to disorientate an assailant.



## Keep an emergency kit in the boot containing the following items:

- Reflective/fluorescent jacket or vest.
- Waterproof coat/umbrella. Flat walking shoes.
- Spare fuses/bulbs.
- Warning triangle.
- Puncture aerosol.
- First aid kit.



## On long winter journeys, consider taking:

- Screen de-icer. Ice scraper.
- Blanket.
- Warm coat, wellington boots and gloves.
- Shovel and a mat or sacking for extra tyre grip in deep snow.

# Car maintenance...

Proper vehicle maintenance and preparation for your journey are essential elements for safety. Have your vehicle serviced regularly and ask your garage to check any items you suspect may be faulty.



## Reduce the risk

Get to know your vehicle and ensure that it is regularly serviced. Watch out for changes to the feel of the car or strange noises or smells and investigate. Don't ignore warning lights. Carry out regular checks as follows:



## Weekly checks

- Tyres - condition & pressure
- Coolant system - fluid level
- Screenwash level & adjust nozzles
- Fuel - refill when below half full
- Oil level
- Windscreen & wipers
- Lights - clean & check
- Mirrors - clean & check



## Additional monthly checks & before a long journey

- Tyres - check tread for depth (min. 1.6mm); look for uneven wear or poor condition



# What to do if you break down on a road...



## Stay Safe!

- Get your vehicle off the road if possible.
- Ensure your passengers are safe and that animals are kept under control.
- Wear a high-visibility jacket or vest to help other road users see you.
- Don't stand (or let anybody else stand) between your vehicle and oncoming traffic.
- It is always best to wait away from your car when you've broken down but if you feel at risk from another person then remain in your car. Lock the doors and put your seatbelt on. Once you feel that the danger has passed leave your car and wait at the roadside, preferably behind a barrier if there is one.



## Warn other road users by...

- Using your hazard warning lights and keeping your sidelights on if it's dark or visibility is poor.
- Placing a warning triangle on the road at least 45 metres (approximately 10 car lengths) behind your vehicle. Always take care when placing or retrieving them and **never** use them on motorways.
- Not standing where you will prevent other road users seeing your lights at night or in poor visibility.



## Call for help...

- If you have broken down in a location that may endanger you or others contact the Police by dialling 999 and explain the situation.
- Contact your breakdown recovery operator. Give clear instructions on your location: road number, direction of travel and any specific local landmarks to help them locate you.
- Give them your vehicle details (make, model and registration number) together with the number of people it was carrying. An indication of what is wrong with the vehicle will also help.
- When help arrives ask for proof of identity.



# What to do if you break down on the motorway...

If something goes wrong with your vehicle on the motorway, try to leave at the nearest exit or pull into a service area.



## If this isn't possible:

- Pull on to the hard shoulder, stopping as far to the left as possible. Turn your wheels to the left.
- Use your hazard warning lights and keep your sidelights on if it's dark or visibility is poor.
- Try to stop near an emergency telephone (every mile on the hard shoulder).
- Leave the vehicle by the left-hand doors and encourage passengers to do the same.
- Wear a high-visibility jacket or vest to help other road users see you.
- DO NOT cross the carriageway.
- Keep passengers well away from the carriageway, standing behind the crash barrier.
- Any animals must be left in the vehicle unless there is an emergency where they should be kept under proper control behind the crash barrier, well away from the carriageway.
- Do not attempt even simple repairs.



## Call for help...

- Follow the arrows on the marker posts along the hard shoulder (every 100 metres) to the nearest emergency telephone. Calls are free and are connected directly to the relevant highway authority Regional Traffic Control Centre.
- If you use a mobile telephone make sure you give the marker post number to help your breakdown recovery operator and police to locate you.
- If you feel vulnerable or at risk from another person return to your car by the left hand doors, lock the doors and put your seatbelt on. Once you feel that the danger has passed leave your car and wait behind the crash barrier as far back from the carriageway as possible.
- If you have a disability or medical condition that prevents you from leaving the car, leave your seatbelt on, use your hazard lights and contact the police via 999.

# What to do if you breakdown on a smart motorway...

Smart motorways use technology to keep the traffic flowing and may include sections where there is no hard shoulder.



## In addition to our motorway advice, if you find yourself broken down on a Smart motorway then do the following:

- Pull into an Emergency Refuge Area (ERA) that are located at regular intervals (they can be identified by a blue sign containing an orange SOS telephone symbol).
- Use your hazard warning lights and leave your sidelights on if it is dark or visibility is poor.
- Leave the vehicle by the left-hand doors and encourage passengers to do the same.
- Keep passengers well away from the carriageway, standing behind the crash barrier.
- Wear a high-visibility jacket or vest to help other road users see you.
- You MUST use the emergency telephone within the ERA to speak to the Regional Traffic Control Centre. They will send someone to assist you.
- If you cannot pull into an ERA then try to pull as close to the nearside boundary/verge as possible. Consider if it is safe to leave your vehicle by the left-hand doors and wait behind the crash barrier. DO NOT put yourself at risk. If you do not feel safe then follow the advice for a live lane breakdown and call 999.
- Once the Regional Traffic Control Centre is aware of your situation they will be able to close lanes and will send help in the form of the police or traffic officers.



## Re-joining the carriageway...

- When re-joining the carriageway build up speed on the hard shoulder and look for a suitable gap in the traffic.
- When leaving an Emergency Refuge Area (ERA) follow the instructions you are given from the Regional Traffic Control Centre. They may close the nearside lane temporarily to allow you to exit and send the police or traffic officer to assist you.

### WHAT TO DO IF YOU BREAK DOWN IN A LIVE LANE?

**IF YOU BREAK DOWN IN A LIVE LANE, DO NOT ATTEMPT TO LEAVE YOUR VEHICLE. USE YOUR HAZARD LIGHTS, KEEP YOUR SEATBELT ON AND CALL THE POLICE IMMEDIATELY VIA 999 EXPLAINING THAT YOU ARE ON THE MOTORWAY.**

# Travelling with children...



The law says that children travelling as passengers in cars, vans or goods vehicles must use the correct child seat if they are under 135cm tall or under 12 years old (whichever comes first).

Ensure children are secured in the correct seat/seatbelt for their age. It is the driver's responsibility in law to ensure that all children under the age of 14 comply with the seatbelt laws. The tables opposite and overleaf summarise the main legal requirements for wearing seatbelts.

Always buy a new child seat unless you are very sure of the history of one obtained second-hand.

A child should NEVER be put into any restraint previously subjected to the stress of a collision, or violent stop.

Ensure that the child seat is fitted properly every time. It is no good if you don't.

Check that any metal fastenings have not become overheated in strong sun.



## Mums to be

Pregnancy is no excuse for not wearing a seatbelt, but ensure that the lap belt goes across both hip bones under the 'bump' - not over it - with the diagonal belt across the chest as normal.



## Airbags

Airbags are a proven safety feature when used in conjunction with a seatbelt. They have saved many lives and minimised injuries for countless others.

However, there are certain guidelines that should be followed:

- NEVER fit a rear-facing car seat with an active airbag in front of it.
- Refer to the vehicle handbook regarding the airbag systems fitted to your car.

If in any doubt, seat young children in the rear seat, properly restrained.

Children may become bored on long journeys. Take time to plan your route to include plenty of 'comfort' breaks and provide them with some form of safe 'in-car entertainment' that will not distract you driving.

# Car Seat Groups from Britax Römer

## i-Size infant carrier

- BABY-SAFE i-SIZE
- Birth - 83 cm (≈ 15 months /13 kg)

Vehicle seat angles vary from car to car and in those with a steep incline you can adjust the base angle to a flatter position for your baby with the BABY-SAFE i-SIZE FLEX BASE. This provides the most ergonomic position for your baby while travelling.



## i-Size extended rearward facing

- DUALFIX i-SIZE
- Birth - 105 cm (≈ 4 years /18 kg)

DUALFIX i-SIZE is one of our most flexible options as it is suitable from birth to four years (105 cm). Featuring 360° rotation you can use it rearward or forward facing, and can even rotate it towards the open car door for easy placing and harnessing.



## Group 0+

- BABY-SAFE PLUS SHR II
- Birth - 13 kg (≈ 12/15 months)

The BABY-SAFE PLUS SHR II proves that smart can be simple - combining advanced safety features such as innovative side impact protection with the convenience of single-handed release.



## Group 0+/1

- DUALFIX
- Birth - 18 kg (≈ 4 years)

The award-winning DUALFIX combines eye catching design with state-of-the-art safety technology. 360° rotation means you can choose when to switch your child from rearward to forward facing. And a host of safety features ensure a safe journey from newborn to four years.



## Group 1

- KING II LS
- 9 -18 kg (≈ 9 months - 4 years)

The innovative KING II LS features a unique light and sound indicator that helps you to harness your child to the correct tension. With advanced side and frontal protection, keeping your child safe has never been simpler.



## Group 2/3

- KIDFIX II XP SICT
- 15 - 36 kg (≈ 4 - 12 years)

KIDFIX II XP SICT is a high back booster seat that goes beyond legal safety standards. Benefiting from our unique frontal impact protection, optimal lap belt tightening and superior side impact protection, your child will enjoy the highest levels of safety from four to 12 years.



Further child car seat safety information is available at [www.britax-roemer.co.uk](http://www.britax-roemer.co.uk)

# Your responsibility as a driver...



## What the law says...

The law says all children up to **135cm tall** (around 4'5"), **or the age of 12**, whichever comes first, in the front or rear seats in cars, vans and other goods vehicles must travel in the correct child restraint for their weight with very few exceptions.

Visitors to the UK from abroad must also use the correct child restraint for their children - there are no exceptions for them. Family and friends expecting visitors should make sure that their visitors understand the rules. They may need to help them make arrangements so that children use the correct child restraint at all times. Car rental companies can supply child restraints for their customers if booked in advance.

	Front Seat	Rear Seat	Who is responsible?
Driver	Seatbelt must be worn if fitted	-	Driver
Child under 3 years of age	Correct child restraint must be used	Correct child restraint must be used. If one is not available in a taxi, child may travel unrestrained.	Driver
Child from 3rd birthday up to 135cms in height (or 12th birthday whichever they reach first)	Correct child restraint must be used	Correct child restraint must be used where seat belts fitted. Must use adult belt in a rear if correct child restraint not available: in a taxi OR for a short distance in an unexpected necessity OR if 2 occupied child restraints prevent fitting a third. A child 3 years and over may travel unrestrained in the rear seat of vehicle if seat belts are not fitted in the rear.	Driver
Child aged 12 or 13, or over 135cms in height	Seatbelt must be worn if available	Seatbelt must be worn if available	Driver
Passengers aged 14 and over	Seatbelt must be worn if available	Seatbelt must be worn if available	Passenger

Motorhomes/Campervans are treated in the same way as cars, vans and goods vehicles for seatbelt wearing purposes.  
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# With award winning breakdown cover from GEM, help is only a phone call away...

- Fully comprehensive UK cover
- Nationwide cover 24/7, 365 days a year
- Free GEM App for iPhone and Android
- Competitive premiums
- Personal cover

[www.motoringassist.com](http://www.motoringassist.com) 0345 3700 940

## About GEM Motoring Assist

GEM is a road safety organisation, established in 1932. Our aim is to improve safety for all road users through the promotion and initiation of accident prevention measures in the UK, and to provide motoring and safety information to our members.

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