

MOTORISTS URGED TO GET READY FOR WINTER

CLOCKS go back one hour on Sunday when British Summer Time comes to an end and motorists will be faced with reduced daylight hours and the possibility of inclement weather.

Although the weather so far this year has been generally mild throughout the country, the Scottish Police Service urges all road users to take additional safety precautions before starting out on their journeys and to prepare themselves for a change in the weather and not get caught off guard.

It is the time of the year when Scotland's eight police forces, in conjunction with the Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland (ACPOS), carry out their annual '*National Winter Safety Campaign*' – a two-day, country-wide campaign focussing on promoting safer driving in adverse winter conditions over the weekend of Saturday 24 and Sunday 25 October

“Police forces will be highlighting various safety issues concerning all road users at this time of the year,” said Chief Superintendent Brian Anderson, speaking for the ACPOS Road Policing Business Area. “Motorists and the general public should be more aware of the potential dangers to users of the country's roads network during the winter months.”

It is vitally important to make sure your vehicle is adequately maintained and that brakes, tyres, lights, batteries, windscreens and wiper blades are in good condition. In addition, washer bottles need to contain an additive to stop the water from freezing.

Check that wiper blades are not worn and are capable of clearing the screen correctly.

All windows including the windscreen should be demisted and fully cleared of any frost, snow or ice before moving off as failure to do so can have catastrophic consequences in the event of a collision.

“This may appear obvious but many drivers fail to clear all the windows prior to driving,” Mr Anderson stressed.

“Tyres are the only point of contact with the road and if they are worn or incorrectly inflated then they have less grip and can significantly increase stopping distances in the event of an emergency. Tyres should be inflated to the manufacturer's specification, as found in the vehicle handbook.”

Tyres should also be checked for bulges, cuts or tears which will weaken the tyre and potentially lead to a collision. The minimum legal tread depth is 1.6mm but this is the legal minimum and it must be remembered that tyres perform more efficiently with a greater depth of tread.

Motorists should remember that stopping distances are greatly increased when the roads are wet or icy and drivers should increase the distance from the vehicle in front. Anticipate changing road and traffic conditions and decelerate rather than relying solely on the brakes.

“Visibility is often reduced because of fog, rain, spray, hail or snow. Remember to stay back from the vehicle in front and ensure that you use dipped headlights in periods of reduced visibility. Fog lights can only be used when visibility is seriously reduced to less than 100 metres but must be switched off if visibility improves.

“It is very important to ensure other road users can see you and dipped headlights should be used.

“It is essential to ensure that windscreens and wipers are in good condition and free from any defects, particularly as a low sun makes it very difficult to see clearly and a dirty, greasy or damaged windscreen can make this worse,” he added.

Chief Superintendent Anderson concluded: “These measures are simple common sense, are easily achieved but are all too often overlooked yet only take a few seconds and will help all road users to avoid some of the dangers that this time of year can bring.

“During this and throughout the coming months, Scottish police officers will, if necessary, stop motorists and provide advice, give warnings and my hope is that these will be heeded. If necessary, offenders can expect to be reported, where appropriate. Some of the offences may only carry a penalty of £30, but think of the other consequences and don’t risk it.”

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Extra points to remember:

A few more pointers for motorists, pedestrians and cyclists alike include:

- Cyclists should ensure that they have suitable lights on their bicycles and that they wear reflective and fluorescent clothing and a cycle helmet.
- Parents of children such as those who do paper rounds should ensure that their children are given this protection, particularly as paper rounds are almost always carried out during the hours of darkness at this time of year.
- Pedestrians should ensure that they wear bright coloured clothing, particularly in rural areas where the street lighting is either non existent or very limited.

(Numerous articles of clothing and bags carried by schoolchildren these days contain reflective and fluorescent material and enable children to be seen from distance.)

Notes to editors:

For interviews about this campaign, please contact your local police force press office.

For further information, please contact:

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