



DRIVING ISSUES

From fuel efficiency and load stability to UK driving laws, car and van drivers have a lot to remember whenever they get on the road. Below are six recent posts received in the PITA e-post bag with tips and information, mainly for UK drivers, though some of it is applicable universally.

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The Paper Industry Technical Association (PITA) is an independent organisation which operates for the general benefit of its members – both individual and corporate – dedicated to promoting and improving the technical and scientific knowledge of those working in the UK pulp and paper industry. Formed in 1960, it serves the Industry, both manufacturers and suppliers, by providing a forum for members to meet and network; it organises visits, conferences and training seminars that cover all aspects of papermaking science. It also publishes the prestigious journal *Paper Technology International* and the *PITA Annual Review*, both sent free to members, and a range of other technical publications which include conference proceedings and the acclaimed *Essential Guide to Aqueous Coating*.



10 TIPS TO INCREASE FUEL EFFICIENCY

With fuel prices slowly climbing, vehicle owners are being advised of the ways they could drive more economically to help increase their fuel efficiency. With the average cost of a litre of unleaded fuel being just over £1.27, Brits are being reminded how they can change their driving to help keep their money in their pockets – particularly those who rely on vehicles for work.

Tim Alcock from LeaseVan.co.uk said: “Paying for fuel is another costly expense those with vehicles need to pay for, and if they’re reliant on the car or van for business it can soon add up. There are ways to help keep petrol costs as low as possible, mainly by being a bit more aware of driving habit and adapting to increase fuel efficiency. Most cars and vans now have built-in systems measuring mpg, which is a great way to look and see whilst you’re driving how your fuel is being affected. Drivers can consume almost 15% less fuel by taking note of what their fuel consumption display is telling them.”

These are LeaseVan.co.uk ‘s ten top tips to increase fuel efficiency:

1. Save on weight

The more weight in the vehicle, the more fuel you’re going to use. If you know you won’t need a certain set of tools during the day, leave them at home.

2. Maintenance

Regular upkeep and maintenance of the vehicle means that all the systems will be working to their optimum standards, meaning they’re as efficient as possible. Checking tyre pressures regularly can improve efficiency. Under-inflated tyres can cause you to use up to two per cent more fuel.

3. Accelerate gently

The harder the acceleration, the more fuel consumed. The smoother the drive, in terms of acceleration and breaking, the less work the vehicle is going to do meaning less fuel will be used.

4. Be kind to your gears

Staying in one gear for too long can slash your efficiency. Many vehicles are now fitted with gear shift indicators, which makes it easier to know which gear you should be in and when to change up or down.

5. Maintain a steady speed

Your speed to drop when you travel uphill, then speed as you roll downhill can also have a positive impact.

6. Keep rolling

It can seem inevitable to stop-start when in traffic, but slowly rolling along at a constant, low speed can help increase the efficiency of your driving. Try slowing extra early when approaching traffic lights or a queue and you might not have to stop completely.

7. Use your air-con wisely

At low speeds air-con can have a dramatic effect on reducing efficiency, instead try opening windows to get air through the vehicle. However, at higher speeds such as on a motorway, the effect of air con isn’t that noticeable.

8. Stick to the limit

The faster you’re travelling, the more fuel you’re using. Driving at 70mph uses up to 9% more than at 60mph, and up to 15% more than at 50mph!

9. Stay aerodynamic

Wind resistance increases fuel consumption. Keeping windows shut at high speeds, removing roof racks and ensuring everything fits inside the vehicle can help save money on fuel.

10. Drive a manual

According to the AA, automatics can use 10% to 15% more fuel than manuals.



SEVEN TIPS TO KEEP IN MIND WHEN LOADING A VAN

New van drivers have been offered seven tips on how to properly load their vehicles without breaking any rules or regulations.

Vehicle leasing experts at LeaseVan.co.uk have revealed advice on the best loading and unloading techniques to help maximise space and reduce the risk of damaged goods.

Common sense goes a long way, but transporting goods safely by van requires a little more thought than simply throwing everything in and hoping for the best.

According to the Road Traffic Act, a person could actually be guilty of an offence if they use a motor vehicle on the road when the weight, position, or distribution of its load could be a risk or danger to someone.

Tim Alcock from LeaseVan.co.uk commented: "Loading goods and transporting them safely shouldn't have to feel like a game of Tetris or Jenga. Not only can a proper loading and unloading technique help you maximise space and reduce the risk of damaging goods during a move, but it's also a legal requirement."

1. Load large items first

Loading bulky items first will allow you to fit all your smaller items around them later, helping you make the most efficient use of your space. As large items are also likely the heaviest items, it's also a good way to prevent damaging fragile items by crushing them. Heavy items should also be distributed evenly across the floor surface of your van, ideally across areas that are most structurally sound.

2. Distribute the load evenly

Always load items in rows from the back to the front of the van space and utilise all space under and inside items to help restrict the movement of small items. You must be careful not to stack your load too high though, and do not exceed your van's load capacity – it's set for a reason and is the driver's responsibility to make sure it's road legal at all times.

3. Create a barrier

Even if your load is secured, there's always a risk that items might move about on the road. In case they do, you need to protect yourself from being hit by any items that could come flying your way when you're driving. Mesh, netting or a sturdy piece of plywood can be used to prevent this.

4. Secure your goods

Cargo can slide around during the journey, which can be a safety concern when it comes to unloading if items have piled up against the doors, or are stacked precariously. Protect fragile and delicate items with moving blankets. Use anchoring points within the van and lashing/tensioning straps to tie items down.

5. Flag it

Although it's generally advised that you should avoid having anything protruding from the back of your vehicle, if a load must hang off the back of your van, ensure it's carefully secured and made visible by fixing high-vis materials to the most protruding points. Likewise, if you're carrying a particularly heavy or fragile load that requires you to drive more slowly, it can be helpful to indicate this to other drivers.

6. Control your speed and braking

Regardless of the load you're carrying, driving a van full of goods is different from driving your average family car because if you accelerate too quickly or brake too harshly, items can move about inside. Van drivers must also be aware of the impact a heavy load has on steering, as a heavy load can have the momentum to turn your vehicle more or less than usual.

7. Unloading

Make sure you unload your van in an area free from traffic or other obstructions so you can take your time. Choose a flat surface, or place brake chocks under the wheels to secure the vehicle if on an incline. Make sure you move items carefully so as not to disturb others than might fall and break. Always make sure to wear gloves too.



VEHICLE DEFECTS CAUSE 32 FATAL CRASHES A YEAR

Drivers have been warned to ensure their vehicles are road worthy after the shocking number of UK road accidents caused by defects has been highlighted.

Motoring experts from LeaseVan.co.uk have reminded drivers just how many crashes in Britain can be attributed to faulty cars or vans and urged vehicle owners to regularly check the quality and condition of parts including tyres, brakes, lights and mirrors.

The latest Department for Transport statistics show that in 2017, a staggering 1,539 road accidents in the UK counted vehicle defects as a contributory factor – including 359 serious and 32 fatal.

Defective brakes were the most common problem and specifically cited in 570 of the most recent year's figures, whilst defective, illegal or under inflated tyres caused 472 crashes, including 115 serious collisions and 14 deadly ones.

Faulty tyres can cause a car or van to lose grip, especially on challenging road surfaces, whilst underperforming brakes can reduce a driver's ability to react promptly to unpredictable situations when behind the wheel.

Tradespeople in particular should bear in mind the maximum load their van can safely carry or tow, as an overloaded or poorly loaded vehicle or trailer was a significant factor in 119 UK road accidents over the twelve-month period, of which four proved fatal and another 29 were deemed serious.

Other vehicle defects that have led to a large number of serious and sometimes deadly crashes include faulty lights or indicators, sub-standard steering or suspension and flawed or missing mirrors.

They were a reported contributory factor in over 400 UK road accidents during 2017.

Such faults also lead to many near misses every day, with a motorist's ability to see properly at night and what's behind them both crucial to road safety.

Highly dangerous cars and vans that can't be steered properly or are too heavy should also be removed from the road until the problem is rectified.

It is recommended that vehicle owners in any doubt about how to assess quality and condition of any potentially defective parts, seek specialist advice as soon as possible.

All motorists must keep their MOT up to date, which legally must be every year if the vehicle is over three years old.

A regular service could be considered too, particularly for commercial or older vehicles and those that cover a high mileage.

Tim Alcock from LeaseVan.co.uk said: "Road safety should always be every vehicle owner's number one concern. It's always better for a journey to be delayed or not undertaken at all, than to travel on the road while risking a predictable and easily avoidable crash that could prove serious or even deadly. Vehicle defects are responsible for a serious collision on UK roads nearly every day, causing two to three deaths per month. But even one is one too many.

"There is nothing the government can do – all the required legislation is in place and it's impossible to enforce all the vehicles on the road all of the time. Drivers themselves must take responsibility and be sensible road users. Specialist assistance should be sought immediately if there is any doubt over the condition of your vehicle or if you're not sure how to check thoroughly themselves. Travelling with even the smallest suspicion that your vehicle could have faulty brakes, defective tyres, flawed lights, missing mirrors or substandard steering or suspension is beyond reckless."



VAN DRIVERS MUST FOLLOW HGV RULES

Tradespeople who use work vans to get to and from jobs could be hit with a fine of up to £300 if they exceed the UK daily driving hours limit, experts have warned.

Motoring specialists from LeaseVan.co.uk have highlighted the law which states that drivers operating a van for commercial purposes must observe the same working hour restrictions and rest period requirements as professional HGV drivers.

Drivers operating a work van for more than four hours per day are not permitted to be behind the wheel for more than ten hours and aren't allowed to be on duty for more than 11 hours on any day in which they drive.

Working drivers can only reach the ten-hour limit twice per week. For other days that week, they are then restricted to nine hours – or 56 hours in a week and 90 hours in any fortnight.

Van drivers on the roads for business purposes must also get at least 11 hours rest daily, take breaks totalling at least 45 minutes after a maximum of four and a half hours of driving and take an unbroken rest period of 45 hours weekly.

Skipping breaks and exceeding these limits could see van drivers hit with a fine of up to £300.

It could also prove dangerous for both the driver and other road users, with tiredness and fatigue among the leading causes of road accidents and being potentially as deadly as drink or drug driving.

Some tradesmen and women don't currently track their time on the roads between jobs, but all have now been urged to keep an eye on their van driving hours.

Though vans don't require a tachograph to be fitted like HGVs, written records should still be kept.

The limits are suspended for the duration of emergencies, where the driver needs to take immediate preventative action to avoid danger to someone or an animal's life or health, or serious damage to property.

Restrictions are also relaxed when a major interruption to essential public service must be avoided – examples include gas, water and electricity supply, drainage, telecommunications or post, and roads, railways, ports and airports.

Drivers of military, police and fire brigade vehicles are also exempt from the UK driving hours rules, as well as those who never drive on public roads, whilst separate rules apply to Northern Ireland.

Tim Alcock from LeaseVan.co.uk said: "Some van drivers might not realise that if they're using their vehicle for business more than four hours daily, they have to follow the same rules as lorry drivers. When travelling from job to job or making a long delivery, it could be quite easy for a van driver to rack up a few hours behind the wheel in a day. But exceeding the applicable legal limit or not getting enough rest in could see van drivers hit hard in the pocket and facing a much-increased risk of crashing. In short, you should never drive for business for more than ten hours a day and you shouldn't work for more than eleven hours a day in which you drive.

"Van drivers also need to take at least eleven hours off between shifts on the road, though this can be reduced to nine on occasion. They should take at least 45 minutes in breaks if they drive for four and a half hours and take consecutive days off at least once a fortnight too.

"It's also important to keep a written record of driving hours if you expect to exceed four hours behind the wheel in a day, even though a tachograph isn't required on light goods vehicles. It's essential that all drivers remember, though, that driving when tired or fatigued can cause accidents and prove as dangerous as operating a vehicle while intoxicated."



TEN STRANGEST UK PARKING LAWS

Drivers who want to steer clear of hefty fines have been urged to get to grips with ten of the strangest British parking laws. Researchers from LeaseVan.co.uk have revealed some of the lesser known parking laws that apply in the UK and advised vehicle owners to take note or risk being caught out by authorities. Offences that could land motorists in hot water include saving a space, using the pavement and parking badly.

Tim Alcock of LeaseVan.co.uk said: "Vehicle owners across the country could be breaking the law simply by parking their vehicles, and not even realise it. It's easy to use common sense and we've all got used to the wide array of rules that can apply in private car parks and where permits are required. But there are many more obscure rules that drivers could still fall foul of when parking on a public road. To help Brits avoid getting caught out by the relevant authorities, we've highlighted ten of the strangest parking laws in the UK and urge all motorists to take note."

Here is the LeaseVan.co.uk list of the ten strangest parking laws in the UK:

1. Don't save a space

Using wheelie bins, cones or other objects to reserve a parking space near your house or workspace could see drivers fined as it may be seen as causing a dangerous obstruction on the road.

2. Leave the lights on

Vehicles parked on a road where the speed limit is more than 30mph, facing away from the traffic or outside of a designated parking area should technically have their side lights left on overnight, to help prevent a nasty collision.

3. Check all mirrors

Drivers and passengers need to check all their mirrors before exiting a parked vehicle, as it's always the occupants' responsibility to make sure that opening doors won't impede passing pedestrians, cyclists or vehicles.

4. Avoid the pavement

Though it's commonplace on tight residential streets across the country, parking on the pavement has been outlawed by default in London since the 1970s unless permission is otherwise granted. For the rest of the UK, the practice isn't allowed where it might cause an obstruction.

5. Hug the kerb

Bad drivers who essentially abandon their vehicle in the middle of the road by parking more than 50cm away from the kerb could be faced with an immediate on the spot fine.

6. Give junctions a wide berth

It doesn't matter if it's the only space close to your house or work – parking within 10m of a junction is prohibited, to maintain road safety.

7. Keep it clean

If a motorist allows their vehicle to build up too much dirt while it's parked they're breaking the law, as having an unreadable number plate is illegal.

8. Don't use cycle lanes

Parking over a designated cycle lane that's painted on the carriageway isn't allowed – it would, technically, be blocking a lane – so drivers should look elsewhere for a space.

9. No beeping

Pulling up outside a friend, relative or colleague's address and announcing your arrival with a beep is not permitted, as any use of a vehicle's horn while it's stationary is against the law. This also applies to taxis and delivery drivers.

10. Only load big items

Vehicle owners can only use double yellow lines for loading if the goods being dropped off or collected are of sufficient size, weight or difficulty. Grabbing a quick coffee or lunch time meal deal doesn't count.



EIGHT TIPS TO PROTECT TOOLS IN VANS

Tradespeople have been urged to fit their vans with CCTV and a safe to protect valuable tools and equipment from pesky thieves.

Van experts from LeaseVan.co.uk have revealed eight security measures tradespeople can take against criminals in their work vehicles, if forced to leave tools or equipment in vans while working or overnight.

From deadlocks and CCTV to deliberately parking badly and dirty vehicles, the specialist advice could help deter thefts and catch those responsible when a crime is committed.

Tim Alcock from LeaseVan.co.uk said: "Wherever possible, it's advisable to move expensive tools and equipment indoors for secure storage. But sometimes location and circumstances mean tradespeople have no other option than to leave items in their vans while they're parked up on a job or overnight. While of course thieves remain responsible when items are stole, wise tradesmen and women should do whatever they can to avoid becoming a target or victim of crime. To help deter criminals and make a theft less likely to occur or be successful, we've identified some precautionary steps van owners could take."

Here is the LeaseVan.co.uk list of security measures tradesmen and women can take when storing tools or equipment in their commercial vehicles:

1. Intruder alarms

Many Brits nowadays find standard vehicle alarms annoying and will be tempted to ignore them, so it's worth considering installing a separate intruder alarm to discourage possible thieves.

Guard valuable good by fitting a coded device that will trigger when your van is accessed by someone who doesn't have permission.

Some alarms available online can be controlled remotely, synced with your mobile phone and even include a tracker.

2. Tool vault boxes

To give valuable tools and equipment an added layer of security, purchase a van vault box or safe to store them in.

Requiring a key or combination to open, the range of high security options work in a similar way to a personal home safe, but often with tailored compartments for specific tools too.

3. Deadlocks

Deadlocks can give vans enhanced defences against thieves by adding an extra and usually stronger locking point to cab and rear doors.

They are operated independently to a vehicle's standard, factory fitted locks, which allows the driver to control when each door is unlocked individually.

4. CCTV

Most businesses will protect their premises with CCTV cameras that can help both deter and capture potential criminals, so why not their commercial vehicles too?

Small, high quality devices can now be brought relatively cheaply online and one should be installed on both the inside and outside of vans, either permanently or temporarily while parked.

Remember to display a clear warning sign too – this could make a thief turn away before the cameras are even called in to action.

5. Permanent tool marking

Invisible anti-theft marking on your tools and equipment that requires ultra-violet light make them much easier to trace and their ownership indisputable, should they be stolen.

Tradespeople could also choose to use clear and obvious tool markings, such as carving or laser-burning a name or logo into handles, to put off thieves before items are taken.



6. Dyes

Dye tags like those used in clothing retail are the best way to catch thieves literally red handed, as a burst of ink triggered by opening or moving a tool box without permission leaves little doubt who the criminal is and could deter them from trying to make off with your goods.

Concealed packs of dye, used by many banks within stacks of notes, could also be hidden within expensive equipment. They're armed by magnets and triggered by radio waves on a timer.

7. Inaccessible parking

When there are tools and equipment in your commercial vehicle, reverse it into a parking space where the rear doors are practically touching a wall or other obstacle.

If a potential thief can't easily access your van and its contents, they're more likely to be discouraged and move along.

8. Simple dissuasion

A basic sticker on the outside of a van declaring that no tools are stored in the vehicle may be enough to convince a criminal to try elsewhere. Even if it's not true, it's cheap, quick and worth a go.

Keeping the outside of your commercial vehicle in an unusually dirty condition when equipment must be stored inside could also put off thieves, by making the van seem to the outside world like it's less valuable and unlikely to contain important items.