**Motorist’s Urged to Check Their Vision Is Roadworthy**

Police vision checks reveal more than 900,000 British drivers would fail to meet even the most basic eyesight standard for driving[[1]](#footnote-1).

As part of a major new road safety campaign between leading motoring organisations, optical associations, eye care charities and police forces throughout England, Scotland and Wales, police officers invited motorists to take part in voluntary roadside vision screening, with 2.2% of all number plate tests [reading a car number plate from 20 metres] resulting in failure[[2]](#footnote-2).

And, it’s men who appear to have the biggest blind spot when it comes to vision and driving making up three quarters of those who failed the number plate test. Advancing years also increased a driver’s risk of falling short of the legal eyesight standards – the average age of those unable to read a number plate from 20 metres was 69.3 years. The youngest driver to fail was 30 and the oldest 90 years of age.

Eighty-five per cent of drivers who failed the ‘Is Your Vision Roadworthy?’ roadside vision screening had their licence revoked on the spot under legislation known as Cassie’s Law[[3]](#footnote-3).

This comes as traffic volumes are set to peak over the Early May Bank Holiday[[4]](#footnote-4), with the charity Eye Health UK estimating over half a million car journeys will be made by drivers whose vision falls below the legal limit[[5]](#footnote-5), due to an undiagnosed or untreated vision condition or simply because a driver isn’t wearing the eyewear they have been prescribed for driving – a third of those who failed the number plate test and had been prescribed corrective lenses were not wearing them at the time they were stopped for the voluntary roadside test.

**Chief Constable Jo Shiner, the National Police Chief Council’s lead for Roads Policing comments:** “Personal responsibility is the starting point for safer roads.  Making sure your eyesight meets the standards of vision for driving is really important and something only you can do to keep yourself and all other road users safe while driving.”

All drivers have a legal responsibility to ensure their vision meets the eyesight standards for driving every time they get behind the wheel. Uncorrected defective eyesight is punishable with a fine of up to £1,000, three penalty point and possible disqualification. It also increases your risk of a collision occurring and can invalidate your insurance. Yet, DVLA stats show fewer than half of motorists 48.5% are aware of the eyesight standards for driving[[6]](#footnote-6).

Optometrists recommend that we all have our eyes checked every two years, to ensure our vision is fit for the road and meets the full legal eyesight requirements for driving – this includes having adequate field of vision. But the uptake of routine eye tests has fallen over recent years, with 17.5 million Brits currently overdue a trip to the opticians[[7]](#footnote-7). Forty-two per cent of drivers undertaking the roadside vision screening admitted they had not had an eye test in the last two years, as recommended.

A state-of-the-art driving simulator at Brunel University gives an insight into what can happen when people drive with poor eyesight. When a driver’s vision was blurred, they struggled to stay in lane, keep a consistent speed, or read road signs. Even when sight was simply reduced to the legal minimum level, people strayed out of lane 62% more often than with normal vision. They also couldn’t recognise a quarter (23%) of the road signs they passed[[8]](#footnote-8). Impaired vision also prevents motorists from reacting to hazards and causes fatigue.

Around 3,000 people are killed or injured by a driver with failing eyesight every year in the UK[[9]](#footnote-9).

**Emma Damen, daughter of Jim Tassell who was tragically killed when a driver knocked him off his bike while he cycled along a country lane near Andover, Hampshire in 2022 says:** “My Dad was killed by a driver who could not see more than 2 metres ahead, the legal requirement is 20 metres. This driver knew his eyesight was defective yet still chose to drive resulting in indescribable devastation to me and my family. I urge anyone who has concerns regarding their own eyesight or another driver, please get an eyesight test to confirm you are safe to drive.”

Department of Transport statistics also show there were 33,399 casualties over the past decade to road users where glare from sunlight has been among the contributing factors. On average, there were 653 people being killed or experiencing serious injury each year[[10]](#footnote-10).

Conditions such as cataracts – a clouding of the lens which affect the vision of over half (54%) of over 60s[[11]](#footnote-11) – can increase sensitivity to light and glare caused by the sun and on-coming headlights.

**Professor Steve Taylor of the Federation of Ophthalmic & Dispensing Opticians, one of the organisations behind the Is Your Vision Roadworthy? campaign, says:** “With 90 per cent of information needed to drive being visual we’re urging all motorists to ‘think eyes every time they drive’ and ensure their vision is fit to drive – it could just save their life.”

For practical advice and information about keeping vision roadworthy as well as information about the legal eyesight standards and eye conditions that need to be notified to the DVLA visit **VisionAndDriving.info**.

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**Notes to Editors**

Case studies available on request.

Eyesight standards for driving:

Every driver must…

be able to read (with glasses or contact lenses, if necessary) a car number plate made after 1 September 2001 from 20 metres.

must also meet the minimum eyesight standard for driving by having a visual acuity of at least decimal 0.5 (6/12) measured on the Snellen Scale (with glasses or contact lenses, if necessary) using both eyes together or, if you have sight in one eye only, in that eye.

And, have an adequate field of vision.

There are more stringent standards for people who drive buses and lorries.

There are also a number of eyesight conditions which you must notify the DVLA about, including glaucoma. Your optometrist can advise you about the full range of conditions.

1. Based on a series of roadside eye tests conducted by police throughout Britain between 27th February and 12th March which found 2.2% of drivers failed the number plate test. Sample 898 motorists. Figures from DVLA, Scottish Govt, Welsh Gov & NI GOV show there are 41.7 million active licence holders in the UK. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Association of Optometrists, Association of British Dispensing Opticians, BRAKE, Central Optical Fund College of Optometrists, Department for Transport\*, DVLA\*, Driving Mobility, Eye Health UK, Federation of Ophthalmic & Dispensing Opticians, GEM Motoring Assist, IAM Road Smart, National Highways, National Police Chiefs' Council, Older Drivers Forum, RAC Foundation, Road Safety GB. \* Working Group. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. D751E – Under legislation known as Cassie’s Law – introduced after a teenager was killed in an accident involving an 87-year-old driver who had failed an eye test earlier that day - police can revoke a licence ‘on the spot’ if they deem the driver is unsafe to be on the road. A Freedom of Information Request to DVLA reveals 2,420 licences have been revoked using this legislation since it was introduced. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. The RAC estimates that 17.2 million trips will be made by car across the UK between Friday, April 28 and Monday, May 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Includes those who have been prescribed corrective lenses for driving but fail to wear them. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. DVLA Motoring Survey, July 2021 [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Eye Q Report, EHUK 2022 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Fit to Drive Report, 2012 [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. RSA Insurance Group Analysis [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. DfT [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. NHS England [↑](#footnote-ref-11)