



Update 22.04.2020 – Coronavirus: how to keep your car roadworthy during lockdown...

What's that I can see from the window of my home? Four doors, four wheels, or was that 5... oh yes, I remember now. It's my car. The one I used to use to go shopping for stuff, meeting friends and taking on unnecessary journeys...

We thought we'd share a few tips about looking after your personal transport in the age of car-onavirus

The main thing is to try and make sure you don't have to call anyone out to fix it whilst it's resting, risking the health of all concerned. We need to keep that vital "R" infection rate down as low as possible, as well as avoiding a bill for a new battery (plus labour).

Here are some tips to prevent ensure your motor remains in top tip condition while it's self-isolating:

Do I need to be driving my car?

If you've got the luxury of a powered garage you can put the car battery on a mains trickle charger. Failing that, the easiest thing to do is to drive it around for about half an hour, preferably in daylight (no headlights eating the power) and do that every week or so.

A good guide would be to pootle around long enough to get the engine warmed up (which is good for it anyway). You could combine all that with a trip to the shops for essentials, or helping a vulnerable neighbour with some supplies, just taking a slightly longer route than usual. That's probably as adventurous as motoring is going to be for a few months.

You should stay just on the right side of the police with that routine. RAC Drive says that "solo journeys are strongly advised at the moment, for instance, if you're going to buy essential supplies from the shops. If you need to share a car, you should only do so with members of your household".

Release the handbrake

The other mechanical issue is the brakes binding or even seizing if you lay the car up for too long with the handbrake on. You could leave the handbrake off and put the car in gear and put blocks behind the wheels, but that might be too much hassle or unsafe or illegal on a public highway.

If it's on the street, another additional precaution – mandated by the Highway Code – is to have the front wheels close to pointing towards the kerb (of parked nose downhill) or away from the kerb (of the front of the car is pointing uphill). Just in case.

But a weekly drive should prevent sticky brakes anyhow and the Highway Code states you must apply the handbrake.

Do I still need to get an MOT?

Last month, the UK government announced that drivers had been given a six-month extension to their MOTs due to the coronavirus pandemic.

The new rules – which apply to cars, motorcycles and light vans – dictate that motorists who have an MOT due from Monday 30 March will automatically receive a six-month extension.

However, vehicles must still be kept in a roadworthy condition, with garages remaining open for essential repair works, and prosecutions for unsafe vehicles still possible.

But, will your insurance still be valid if you choose to postpone?

Clare Egan, head of motor at Admiral, says: "If you're unable to get your vehicle tested there is no need to worry as it will not invalidate a claim should you need to make one, providing you keep car vehicle safe and roadworthy during this time.

"It's important to also remember that garages will remain open for any essential repair work during this time as having a safe and secure vehicle is paramount at all times.

"You should only be driving your vehicle if it is safe to do so otherwise you risk putting yourself and other road users in danger."

Those are the basics for keeping your car roadworthy. Using it sparingly will keep parts lubricated and avoid distortion to the brakes, tyres and other components. Cars are made to be driven not parked after all. One day your car, a symbol and instrument of personal freedom, will be liberated and it, and its driver, can frolic in the country free from persecution by a police drone. Something to look forward to...

This is a difficult time for everybody, and as we are open supporting critical services to stay on the road. We are here for everyone – Stay Safe.

The Fleetline Team

