

Call to arms: do your bit to reduce strain on the NHS

Road Safety GB are encouraging all road users to help reduce the strain on the emergency services during the coronavirus pandemic by taking extra care when making essential journeys, with support from the Department for Transport's *THINK!* campaign.

On 23 March, prime minister Boris Johnson announced a series of measures to delay the spread of the virus – in order to reduce pressure on the NHS and save lives.

Under the measures, people are only allowed to leave home for very limited purposes:

- shopping for basic necessities, for example food and medicine, which must be as infrequent as possible
- one form of exercise a day, for example a run, walk, or cycle - alone or with members of your household
- any medical need, including to donate blood, avoid or escape risk of injury or harm, or to provide care or to help a vulnerable person
- travelling for work purposes, but only where you cannot work from home

Early evidence suggests these measures are reducing the number of vehicles on the road - but nonetheless, some still need to use the roads for essential journeys such as getting to work and for food shopping.

Meanwhile, there is evidence that others are returning to cycling – to either travel to essential jobs or fulfil their daily exercise quota.

With that in mind, Road Safety GB has launched a new campaign, supported by *THINK!*, stressing to all road users the importance of taking extra care while making essential journeys.

Statistics show 160,597 people were killed or injured on Great Britain's roads in 2018 – an average of 440 people each day.

In all of these cases, the police would have attended – due to the nature of the Government's casualty reporting system – while a significant proportion would have required the care of paramedics.

An average of 70 people per day were seriously injured (25,511) on the roads in 2018 – the vast majority of whom would have required hospital treatment.

To reduce the number of road casualties during these unprecedented times, the Take Extra Care campaign urges all road users to only travel when absolutely essential.

For those who must, the plea is to do everything they can to avoid collisions and casualties, including:

- Always drive at an appropriate speed
- Always wear a seatbelt
- Never drive under the influence of alcohol or drugs
- Never use a mobile phone behind the wheel

Baroness Vere, roads minister, said: “We all need to follow government guidelines and travel only when it’s essential, but fewer people on the roads doesn’t mean we should be any less careful.

“It’s important our NHS staff and emergency services are able to concentrate all of their efforts on coronavirus – so now more than ever it’s crucial that we take care when driving. It’s just one way we can support our incredible frontline workers and do our bit.”

Alan Kennedy, executive director of Road Safety GB, said: “These are unprecedented times and society as a whole has a responsibility to ease the strain currently being placed on the NHS – and all emergency services, who are already working so hard on our behalf

“Whether you are a driver, rider, cyclist or pedestrian – we can all play our part over the coming months by only travelling when necessary, and taking extra care on every journey.

“Our key message – as is always the case – reduce speeds, wear a seatbelt, drive sober and alert, and stop your vehicle to use a mobile phone.”

END