

Workers shouldn't be driven to tailgating

TAILGATING is a commonplace, dangerous practice on our roads. When it comes to drivers who work for high profile organisations sometimes, no matter how much they are drilled about safe driving, the day-to-day pressures of the job along with time constraints can often lead to this kind of bad behaviour.

Therefore, fleet managers must continually 'remind' staff in order to highlight the issue – it can also be included in the driver handbook that outlines work policies and procedures. It's important for drivers to know that their actions out on the road can pose a danger to themselves, to others, and to the organisation's reputation. Education is vital because this behaviour breaches the Highway Code and can be considered as a careless driving offence.

WHAT IS TAILGATING?

Tailgating is when one driver follows another driver within a distance that makes it impossible to stop if the vehicle ahead stops suddenly. It can range from unintentional through to aggressive and extremely dangerous. Drivers tailgate for a number of reasons including:

- 1) Expressing displeasure or frustration at being cut off or held up.
- 2) Protecting their lane from others moving into it.
- 3) Normalisation of the tailgating habit, meaning drivers don't see it as dangerous.
- 4) To slipstream the vehicle in front because they believe they will use less fuel.

THE HIGHWAY CODE RECOMMENDS THE FOLLOWING:

Stopping Distances

- Drive at a speed that will allow you to stop well within the distance you can see to be clear. You should leave enough space between you and the vehicle in front so that you can pull up safely if it suddenly slows down or stops. The safe rule is never to get closer than the overall stopping distance (see highwaycodeuk.co.uk).
- Allow at least a two-second gap between you and the vehicle in front on roads carrying faster-moving traffic and in tunnels where visibility is reduced. The gap should be at least doubled on wet roads and increased still further on icy roads

- Large vehicles and motorcycles need a greater distance to stop. If driving a large vehicle in a tunnel, you should allow a four-second gap between you and the vehicle in front.
- If you have to stop in a tunnel, leave at least a 5-metre gap between you and the vehicle in front.

CARELESS DRIVING

Tailgating can also be classed as a careless driving offence. Drivers can be guilty of a careless driving offence if they drive a mechanically propelled vehicle on a road or other public place without due care and attention, or without reasonable consideration for other persons using the road or place. There are several ways this can be dealt with by the authorities:

- Summons
- Summons with an offer of educational training
- Fixed penalty
- Fixed penalty with an offer of educational training
- A warning and no further action

There's no standard list of behaviours or poor manoeuvres but any minor breach of the Highway Code could be considered to be an offence:

- Tailgating
- Not giving way at a junction
- Overtaking and forcing your way into a queue of traffic
- Using the wrong lane at a roundabout
- Ignoring a lane closed sign and forcing your way into an orderly queue
- Lane hogging
- Inappropriate speed
- Overtaking on the inside
- Wheel spins
- Hand brake turns
- Operating a satnav or reading a map while driving
- Eating or drinking at the wheel
- Lane hopping or weaving
- Overtaking and causing an approaching vehicle or overtaken vehicle to brake

