

THE RMI GUIDE TO PASSENGER SAFETY

Driving demands all of the concentration that can be mustered, and it is when this is broken that accidents can occur. In hot weather the driver can become tired, and adult passengers can cause unwanted distractions, but it is children that are often the most disruptive element. Unfortunately families across the UK are bringing all these ingredients together as they embark on Easter road trips.

According to Sue Robinson, Retail Motor Industry Federation (RMI) Director, it is vital to properly prepare for these Easter journeys. She said. "If you are motoring with your family you will want to make sure they are travelling safely. Over the last few years vehicles have been made much safer for occupants in the event of a crash, but there is still a lot you can do yourself to protect your passengers.

"If you have very young children, make sure you have proper child seats in which to place them. Apart from the fact that strapping your child in a seat may save their lives in the event of a collision, the fact that you know where they are at all times could mean the difference between your having your attention focused on the road ahead, and having an accident".

When buying or installing child seats, there are a few things to remember:

- Always buy the right car seat for your child's weight and physical development, checking for the British Standard Kitemark or the European standard approval
- Replace the seat as the child grows
- Have fixed seats fitted by a professional installer
- Check the seat is firm at all times, making sure before every journey
- Make sure that the harness is firm: you should only be able to get one or two fingers between the strap and the child's chest
- The RMI recommends that you do not use a second hand child seat
- Replace any seat that has previously been involved in an accident
- If anyone else is driving your child, make sure they know how to fit the seat and monitor its use
- If you hire a vehicle, double check the fitting

If the front passenger seat is fitted with an airbag:

- Never put a baby seat in the front unless the airbag can be deactivated
- If it is feasible sit older children in the back

Other passengers will need to use seatbelts. The rules on seatbelts are as follows:

Driver:

Front seat - Seat belt must be worn if fitted

Responsibility - Driver

Child under three

Front seat- Appropriate restraints must be worn
Rear seat- Appropriate restraints must be worn if fitted
Responsibility-Driver

Child aged three to 11 and under 1.5m in height

Front seat - Appropriate child restraint must be worn if available. If not an adult seat belt must be worn if fitted
Rear seat- Appropriate child restraint must be worn if available. If not an adult seat belt must be worn if fitted
Responsibility-Driver

Child aged 12 or 13 or younger child 1.5m in height

Front seat- Adult seat belt must be worn if fitted
Rear seat- Adult seat belt must be worn if fitted
Responsibility-Driver

Adult passengers

Front seat- Seat belt must be worn if fitted
Rear seat- Seat belt must be worn if fitted
Responsibility-Passenger

Robinson explains the guidelines for pregnant passengers, "If you have a pregnant passenger, they still must wear a seatbelt. The lap belt should go under the bump across both hip bones, while the diagonal strip goes across the chest as normal.

"If you are going on a long journey you need to keep your passengers' minds occupied, tempers even, and hands away from danger".'

Methods include:

- Use child locks if fitted to ensure that curious fingers do not cause problems
- When loading up the car do not squash things in too tightly, leave room so that passengers feel comfortable
- Keep some appropriate toys and games available
- Do not allow anything to be stored on the back shelf; if the car comes to a sudden halt, items placed there could fly off and hurt vulnerable passengers
- Take care when using electric windows; even with anti-trap devices little fingers can get caught and hurt
- If emotions run high stop the car as soon as possible; problems are best dealt with while stationary
- Place sunshades on rear windows to protect children from too much sun, and to prevent nausea

- Build regular rest breaks into your journey plans as children need to stretch their legs and use the toilet

If you feel you need to buy any child seats or sun visors, or want to upgrade your seatbelts, and do not know where to look visit www.rmif.co.uk and click on the 'find a service' function.

You will also find details of RMI members that sell new and used cars or motorcycles, provide vehicle servicing and repair, run vehicle auctions, and details of petrol forecourts.

Robinson continues, "Businesses that belong to the RMI are bound by the conditions of their membership to provide a good service to their customers.

"When having a service or any form of work carried out on your car use a reputable garage, be it the dealer who sold you the car or, a local independent garage. If the supplying garage is too far away for such jobs, a local RMI member would be happy to support you with service.

"A member will be able to advise you on the type of service you need, and will be able to point out potential problem areas before they arise, or become serious.

"Once you have your family strapped in, provided some amusement for them, and you are finally on your way, relax. So long as you remain calm everything should be fine, and remember that your family will be behind you all the way...literally."

ENDS

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The Retail Motor Industry represents the interests of operators in England, Wales, Northern Ireland and the Isle of Man providing sales and services to motorists and businesses. The RMI has a formal association with the independent Scottish Motor Trade Association which represents the retail motor industry in Scotland.