



Protect yourself

Sometimes, when driving, potentially threatening situations can arise. This factsheet provides advice on avoiding aggressive confrontations and on minimising the risks of becoming a victim of crime while on a trip for business or pleasure.

British Crime Survey (BCS) statistics – violence

In 2003/2004, the BCS estimated that the total number of violent offences in England and Wales was 2,708,000, the figure little changed since the previous year. Just over one third were incidents where the offender was a stranger to the victim, with 44% of victims of such crimes being male and 19% female. Violent crime has fallen 36% since its peak in 1995 (4,256,000 total number of offences).

(See www.homeoffice.gov.uk)

Preparations

- Keep the car in good working order and regularly serviced.
- Check oil, water and tyres regularly and ensure there is enough petrol to complete the journey.
- Plan the route before starting and allow plenty of time for the journey. Where possible, travel on main or well-used roads.
- Tell someone the route you will be taking and when you expect to arrive and inform them of any changes.
- Have directions and maps in the car to avoid asking the way.
- Ensure your mobile phone is fully charged and/or that you have change and a phone card to make an emergency phone call by landline.

Avoiding road rage

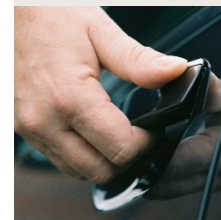
The Thames Valley Police lists its top tips for handling road rage incidents as:

- Do not become defensive with another driver if they are angered by a driving error. Acknowledge your mistake with a wave, or say sorry.
- Do not lose your temper. Returning verbal abuse or threatening gestures will only make things worse.
- Do not rise to any challenges while you are driving. Drive within the correct speed limit and do not be distracted.
- If you are followed, make your way to a highly populated area and if possible keep driving until you are in a busy area or at a police, fire or ambulance station or a garage. Otherwise, sound your horn and flash your lights to attract attention.
- Report any driving incidents to the police, giving as much information as possible.

It is important that driving behaviour does not provoke an aggressive response. It is therefore recommended to:

- Always be courteous and aware of other road users and their intentions.
- Ensure that drivers know what you plan to do by using indicator lights in plenty of time and ensuring correct lane discipline.
- Avoid provocative actions, such as using the horn, flashing lights or driving too close to the vehicle in front.

For more information please email: general.enquiries@daimler.com



British Crime Survey (BCS) statistics – car crime

In 2003/2004, the BCS estimated that the number of vehicle related thefts in England and Wales was approx 2,121,000, down 10% from the previous year. Thefts of vehicles were down 13% over 2002/2003, while thefts from vehicles were down 6% on previous year. Vehicle theft peaked in 1993 at 4,296,000 incidents. (See www.homeoffice.co.uk)

Further precautions

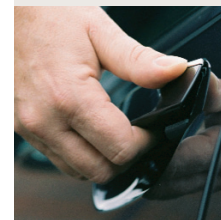
- Do not have valuables visible in the car and keep handbags, briefcases and mobile phones out of reach of open windows.
- If travelling at night in an unfamiliar or threatening location, keep the car locked and the window and/or sunroof only partly open.
- If you see another driver in difficulty, preferably don't stop. Drive on and report it by telephone as soon as possible.
- Never pick up hitchhikers.
- If someone tries to point out faults on your car, ignore them and check later when in a safe place.
- If a car pulls alongside you at lights or a road junction, trying to attract your attention, ignore them and don't make eye contact.
- If you think you are being followed, try to alert other drivers with your lights and horn.
- If a car pulls up in front and you have to stop, do not turn off the engine. If the driver leaves the car and approaches threateningly, reverse as far as possible. Switch on the hazard lights and sound the horn continuously.
- If approached when stationary, stay in the car with the doors locked, the window slightly open and the engine running. If in any doubt, drive away.
- At the petrol station, lock the car before going to pay for fuel.
- When parking, use a well-lit area whenever possible.
- When returning to the car, have the keys ready in your hand to open up quickly. Before getting in, check the back seat.

Advice from the Home Office

The Home Office leaflet "Be Safe, Be Secure – Personal Safety" includes the following advice in its general points on personal protection:

- *You are safest in bright, well-lit and busy areas.*
- *Try to look and act confident – look like you know where you are going and walk tall.*
- *Spread your valuables around your body e.g. phone in bag and keys/money in pockets. Do not be conspicuous about the valuables you are carrying.*
- *It may be better to let someone take something from you rather than get into a confrontation and risk injury.*
- *You can use reasonable force in self-defence. You can protect yourself with something you are carrying anyway (for example, keys or a can of deodorant), but you may not carry a weapon.*
- *If you decide to defend yourself, your attacker might be stronger than you, or may take what you are using in self-defence and use it against you. It is often better just to shout loudly and run away.*
- *Shout 'fire' rather than 'help' – it can get more results.*

The "Be Safe, Be Secure – Personal Safety" leaflet can be downloaded as a PDF file from www.homeoffice.gov.uk/docs2/hs_safesecure6.html



Breaking down

General locations

- If the car is breaking down, try to stop near people in a busy area.
- Turn on the hazard warning lights.
- Assess whether it is safer to stay in the car or to get out, bearing in mind the isolation of the location and the time of day. If staying inside, it is best to sit in the passenger seat to give the impression that you are not on your own. Adjust the mirror to see what is happening behind.
- When making a phone call for help, make it clear if you are alone and ask advice on what to do next.
- Keep the doors locked and the windows only slightly open.
- If someone offers help, ask for identification. If in doubt, ask them to summon the appropriate emergency service rather than assist personally.
- If leaving the car, lock it and note its location. Carry a personal alarm if you have one and, if it is dark, or soon will be, take a torch.
- If you have a warning triangle, place it on the same side of the road 30 metres behind the car.

On the motorway

- With problems on a motorway, try to reach the nearest telephone box. They are usually one mile apart.
- Park well over on the hard shoulder and put your hazard lights on. Leave the car by the nearside door.
- The arrows on the marker posts point to the nearest emergency telephone on your side. Never cross the carriageway to reach a nearer telephone. No money is required. When connected, the police control room will know your exact location.
- Face the oncoming traffic when using the telephone to see anyone approaching. Tell the control room the registration number of any vehicle that stops.
- If you are a woman alone, are disabled or have a disabled passenger or child on board tell the control room.
- Have your breakdown organisation card and registration number ready. After making the call, return to the car.
- The Highway Code advises drivers to stay on the verge and only re-enter the car if they feel in danger. Ten per cent of all fatal accidents involve a vehicle colliding with a car on the hard shoulder.
- In deciding whether to stay on the verge or in the car, consider the weather, the time of day and whether the road is deserted or busy and well lit.
- If staying on the verge, lock all the doors except the front passenger door and take the keys with you.
- If an unidentified vehicle pulls up, get into the front passenger seat, lock the door, adjust the mirrors to see behind and wind the window down slightly.
- When the rescue service arrives, ask the driver for identification. Check he/she knows your name and has been sent to you. Some breakdown operators have been known to cruise waiting to pirate custom.

Advice from the Suzy Lamplugh Trust

The Suzy Lamplugh Trust can be contacted for a range of personal safety advice, including personal alarms, on their information line T 020 8392 1839 or via their website www.suzylamplugh.org

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www.rac.co.uk

www.thamesvalley.police.uk

NOTE: While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information at the time of producing this factsheet, Daimler Fleet Management can take no responsibility for any errors in the content or consequences arising from such errors or misinterpretation of the content.

For more information please email: general.enquiries@daimler.com

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