

Mobile phones - new survey by the IAM

THE BIG HANG UP WHO S LIKELY TO STILL TALK AND DRIVE?

White van man is surprisingly less likely to ignore this week's new laws on handheld mobile phones than drivers of typical family saloons according to a new nationwide survey by the IAM (Institute of Advanced Motorists).

IAM members across the UK took part in a survey spanning two weekends (1 February - 19 February) to gauge where the hand held mobile phone drivers were most often seen and in what traffic conditions.

It is already an offence to drive while using a handheld mobile phone, but from this Tuesday (27 February) there will be a stiffer 60 penalty and three penalty points. Since 2003 there have been more than 250,000 prosecutions.

Incidents of drivers using handheld phones were noted over a 19 day period by IAM members. The survey covered all classes of vehicle, at different times of day and in different traffic conditions.

By type of vehicles, the sample was 674. Drivers of family cars were most likely to offend (145 reported incidents or 21.5 per cent of the total vehicles counted) followed by light commercials or vans (120 reported incidents or 17.8 per cent).

Drivers of sports and high performance cars were least likely to commit the offence, with only 42 reports (6.2 per cent). The other categories were 4x4s, (85 reports or 12.6 per cent) other commercial vehicles (69 reports or 10.2 per cent) large/executive cars (111 reports or 16.5 per cent) and small family cars (102 reports or 15.1 per cent).

The survey also revealed that drivers are more likely to use the handheld mobile while in free flowing traffic (334 incidents) rather than stationary or semi-stationary traffic in heavy congestion (78 incidents). Drivers not affected by the morning and evening rush hours were more likely to pick up the handheld phone with 220 reports compared to peak morning rush (95 reports).

The message must be switch off before you drive off and that applies just as much on the school run as it does to white van man, said IAM Chief Examiner Peter Rodger.

You are four times more likely to crash when you are on a mobile phone. And the IAM has for several years advised caution when using hands-free kit as an alternative: crucially, your attention is still divided, he said. "The consequences of distraction - be it a crash or a fine and points - are just as devastating whether by a hands-free or hand held phone, he said.

The North West was the region with the highest incidence (with nearly 30 per cent of the total reported incidents) while in London and the South East, just 20 per cent of incidents involved vans, slightly below the national average.

ENDS 26 February 2007

Issued by the IAM Press Office 020 8996 9625 Out of hours 0208 996 9600