

This Easter Look Under the Bonnet

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The Easter Bank Holiday traditionally sees a major strain on the roads network with an estimated 350,000 vehicles an hour taking to the roads at peak times.

With the spring rush to get away, though, comes a rash of breakdowns, which can not only spoil the family holiday but contribute to additional congestion. Lanes are taken out with stranded vehicles and recovery trucks. And unexpected queues can cause potentially dangerous pinchpoints.

Breakdown organisations point out that many of these are avoidable, with the number one problem being over heating.

So if you don't want to spend a chunk of the Easter break on the hard shoulder - which is a particularly dangerous and unpleasant place to be - the IAM, the UK's leading advanced driving organisation, recommends that you spend a few minutes under the bonnet before you set off.

This is all the more important is your car has not been serviced recently.

"Dashboard indicators are useful but it is far better to nip a potential problem in the bud before you set off on a long journey," said an IAM spokesman.

- Check your coolant. If it's low, you have a potential leak problem which is worth investigating before you go;
- Test your fan: it can go untested for months, and seize up with salt from the road. Let the engine idle for 10 minutes to make sure the fan "kicks in" as the engine heats up;
- Check and top up the windscreen reservoir, using a non-smear liquid (not washing-up liquid);
- Check the oil; a top up can reduce the possibility of the engine seizing;
- Visually check the brake fluid and power steering levels to make sure there has been no leakage;
- Walk round the car and look at the tyres for damage or underinflation. Remember to check the pressures when they are cold (not when you are already en route), not forgetting the spare (best looked at before you load up!) and lastly
- Try the lights: are all the bulbs working?

For advice on driving techniques to avoid problems on the road this Easter, visit the IAM at iam.org.uk.

ENDS

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