

## French speeding purge gives UK holiday drivers a taste of future camera threat

British holiday drivers speeding through France this summer face a speed camera onslaught that bagged 4.2 million drivers last year, warns The AA Motoring Trust. UK speed cameras processed less than two million offences in 2005.

Although procedures that allow European road authorities to chase up fines in the UK, via the DVLA, dont come into force until next year, UK drivers need to understand the extent of the crackdown facing them. If pulled over by French policemen, their cars can be impounded until on-the-spot fines are paid.

In 2005, speed cameras in France pulled in 205 million (135 million) in fines and the number of points put on drivers licences rose by over 44 per cent to 6.4 million. As well as the current 1,010 speed camera sites, linked to a fully-automated<sup>1</sup> system for sending out fines notices, the French authorities plan to introduce cameras to catch red-light runners at traffic light-controlled junctions and also to snare tail-gating drivers.

UK drivers who took their vehicles to Germany for the World Cup have already encountered a system of road law enforcement that is alien to their normal experience, including speed cameras hidden in or behind crash barriers and tail-gating cameras mounted on bridges and overhead sign gantries.

Up until the turn of the millennium, the death rate on German roads was 50 per cent higher than in the UK, while the French rate was more than twice ours<sup>2</sup>. Governments in both countries, spurred by high-profile accidents, ordered a crackdown and UK drivers who dont wise up to changing enforcement methods risk trouble, says Andrew Howard, head of road safety for The AA Motoring Trust.

This year, UK motorists in Europe will be given a master class in law enforcement that is often covert, contradicting much of what is accepted practice in the UK. Next year, they face the big exam when, from the spring, an EU treaty that recognises financial penalties across borders allows fines in one country to be collected in another.

We hope that UK holiday motorists take the opportunity this summer to understand how French road law enforcement now works, without the fear of fines landing on their doormat when they get home. Any drivers who see this summer as a swansong for fast and reckless driving where any speed goes, unless they bump into a gendarme, are setting themselves up for a big surprise next year.

NOTES TO EDITORS: <sup>1</sup> The system is based on automation of the control and sanction chain, all the way from detecting the offence to generating the speeding ticket. Road Safety in France, 2006. Author: Christian Gerondeau, former head of the Association for the Development of Road Safety Techniques in France.

<sup>2</sup> In 1999, road accident fatalities in the UK ran at a rate of six per 100,000 population. In France it was 14.5, and in Germany 9.5.