

Watch out below

DRIVING TIP

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WATCH OUT BELOW

Drivers tend to ignore all but the most basic of road signs. A red light will still (thankfully) get most drivers to stop, most of the time. But a junction marking stating **STOP** in large capital letters is often ignored; at best it will be treated as a 'give way' and then only by the locals who know the dangers well, but still opt to downgrade the risk in order to save a moment or two.

This may be because we all suffer from 'signage overload': there are so many instructions, official and unofficial, and so many direction signs and road signs competing for our attention that we already have our head full of information coming at us at eye level. That makes it easier to miss the ones painted on the tarmac beneath us.

Road users often seem totally unaware of the relevance of road markings, even when they see them.

But as a rule of thumb, the more paint there is on the road surface, the more potential danger there is. Nobody has chosen to go to the time and expense (not to mention the considerable risk) of putting paint on the road without a reason.

Sadly even experienced motorists seem to be ignorant of the markings. I was recently told that a double white line down the middle of the carriageway was there to stop us turning right across it.

This is worrying, because those particular markings are there for quite a different purpose: to prevent vehicles crossing onto the other carriageway at that point.

Some cross-hatchings are no-go areas (those that have a surrounding solid white line). You should not use these areas unless it is a serious emergency or you are directed there by a police officer.

As well as the official marking on the road surface, there are the unofficial ones which can also serve to remind the observant driver of potential danger. The classic these days is the long, snaking skid mark. That means some unfortunate has had a crash, or a near miss, or certainly taken drastic action for some reason.

When you see these, ask your self what might have happened, and see if there is anything you can do to prevent getting into the same situation.

ENDS

375 words

NOTES TO EDITORS

1. Issued by the IAM Press Office, telephone 020 8996 9625. We have an ISDN line for interviews.

2. The IAM (Institute of Advanced Motorists) directly influences the driving and riding of more than 160,000 road users a year (full members, associates and commercial clients) in the UK and Ireland. Established in 1956, the IAM is today best known for the advanced driving test and the advanced driving course. The IAM has grown to become the UK's leading road safety charity, dedicated to raising driving standards, engaging with the road-using public and influencing road safety policy. IAM Fleet, the corporate arm of the IAM, has two subsidiary companies, Drive & Survive and Fleet Ireland. It also operates IAM Pro-Drive.

3. A 2006 report by Brunel University, following an 18 month study, concluded that advanced driver training produces safer drivers and lower accident involvement, with measurable improvements in knowledge, skills and attitude. The Driving Tips provided by the IAM are part of our broader road safety mission and not intended as a substitute for the advanced driving course.

4. In January 2007, the IAM Motoring Trust was established as the research and advocacy arm of the IAM. The IAM Motoring

Trust will undertake research, promote practical policies, act as an advocate for safer roads, safer drivers and safer vehicles and encourage responsible motoring through education and training

Institute of Advanced Motorists

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