



Mar 20, 2012 09:30 GMT

RAC reports 20% increase in motorists running out of fuel as petrol prices soar

Data shows over 4,780 calls to RAC by drivers running dry in February

- RAC urges Chancellor to cut planned 3p duty rise in Wednesday's Budget

RAC patrols have witnessed a near 20% surge in call outs from motorists stranded in their cars because they've run out of fuel over the past twelve months. In February 2012, 4,780 motorists called an RAC patrol because they'd run out of fuel, compared to just 3,900 one year earlier.

The record high price of petrol and diesel is likely to be a leading cause of the surge of drivers running dry. Diesel is now running at over 146p/litre and petrol at over 139p/litre, meaning a driver of an average car with a 55 litre tank faces a bill of £80 to fill up on diesel - £17 more than in February 2010. For petrol cars, it now costs around £76 for a full 55 litre tank – an extra £14 compared to two years ago. The Government's planned inflationary rise in August of around 3p will add another £1.65 to the cost each and every time people fill up.

David Bizley, RAC Technical Director, comments:

“These figures certainly suggest that the spiraling cost of fuel is causing many motorists to drive on empty. Although this is understandable given the current prices, it is clearly leaving many drivers unnecessarily stranded. Drivers need to make sure they have enough fuel for their journey - but the Government need to do more to help the hard-pressed motorist.

“Since December 2008, we've seen six increases in fuel duty and two hikes in VAT. Another rise is the last thing that motorists need - with oil prices on the rise yet again petrol now costs 24% and diesel 28% more than it did in 2010. For drivers, struggling with high inflation and pay freezes, that's an unacceptable burden.

Last year's RAC Report on Motoring confirmed the impact that high fuel prices and motoring costs are having on drivers. According to the Report, half of drivers have cut back on the number of journeys they make by car and one tenth have been forced to give up transporting their children to school and social activities¹.

David Bizley adds:

“We know motorists are incredibly angry about the cost of fuel – our research shows that the cost of driving remains the number one issue on motorists' minds. We also know that they are struggling to cope with the impact of high motoring costs on their lives.

“Rural motorists are really feeling the strain. With few decent public transport alternatives they've got no choice but to use their cars, no matter the price. The result is that all but the essentials get cut – a third of rural motorists tell

us that they will be forced to give up visiting friends and family if driving costs keep rising.”

While motorists can do little directly about the high cost of fuel, there are ways to save money when driving. RAC recommends the following tips for motorists when on the road:

1. ***Drive smoothly and plan ahead*** – anticipate the road ahead and avoid sharp braking and accelerating. This can save up to 15% on fuel costs.
2. ***Stick to the speed limits*** – slowing down by 10mph saves 40p on fuel for every 10 miles.
3. ***Think of revs as £ signs*** – The more you rev the more it will cost you in fuel.
4. ***Check tyre pressures regularly*** – under-inflated tyres can increase fuel consumption by up to 2%.
5. ***Shop around for fuel*** – use price comparison websites such as www.petrolprices.com to find the cheapest fuel near to where you live.

- Ends -

¹ The 2011 RAC Report on Motoring surveyed 1,002 motorists (i.e. those who hold a current driving licence and drive at least once a month). The research was conducted in February and March 2011, with the questionnaire taking around 20 minutes to complete. The full report was published in June 2011 and is available to download at <http://www.rac.co.uk/report-on-motoring/report-2011/>

Notes to Editors

For all media enquiries, please contact the RAC press team on **+44 (0)1454 664 123**. The line is manned by an on-call press officer outside office hours. ISDN radio studio facilities are available for interviews Monday to Friday.

About the RAC

First formed in 1897, the RAC has been looking after the needs of its

members and championing the interests of drivers for more than 120 years.

Today it has more than eight million members and is one of the UK's most progressive motoring organisations, providing services for both private and business motorists. Whether it's [roadside assistance](#), [insurance](#), [buying a used car](#), [vehicle inspections and checks](#), [legal services](#) or up-to-the-minute [traffic and travel information](#) – the RAC offers a solution for all motoring needs. The RAC is committed to making motoring easier, safer, more affordable and more enjoyable for drivers and road users.

The RAC is the motorist's champion and campaigns to support the interests of its members and UK drivers at a national level. This includes voicing concerns about the increasing cost of motoring, particularly the price of fuel and the high level of tax levied on it, advancing levels of road safety, and supporting the needs of all drivers, from young to old.

The RAC's annual [Report on Motoring](#) – first published in 1989 – is one of a kind and provides a clear insight into the concerns and issues facing today's motorists.

For the very latest news on UK fuel prices, check [RAC Fuel Watch](#). It provides a comprehensive guide to the latest UK unleaded petrol and diesel prices – both at the wholesale level and at the pump - and tracks these prices daily to help drivers check if the price they pay to fill up is a fair one.

Contacts

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