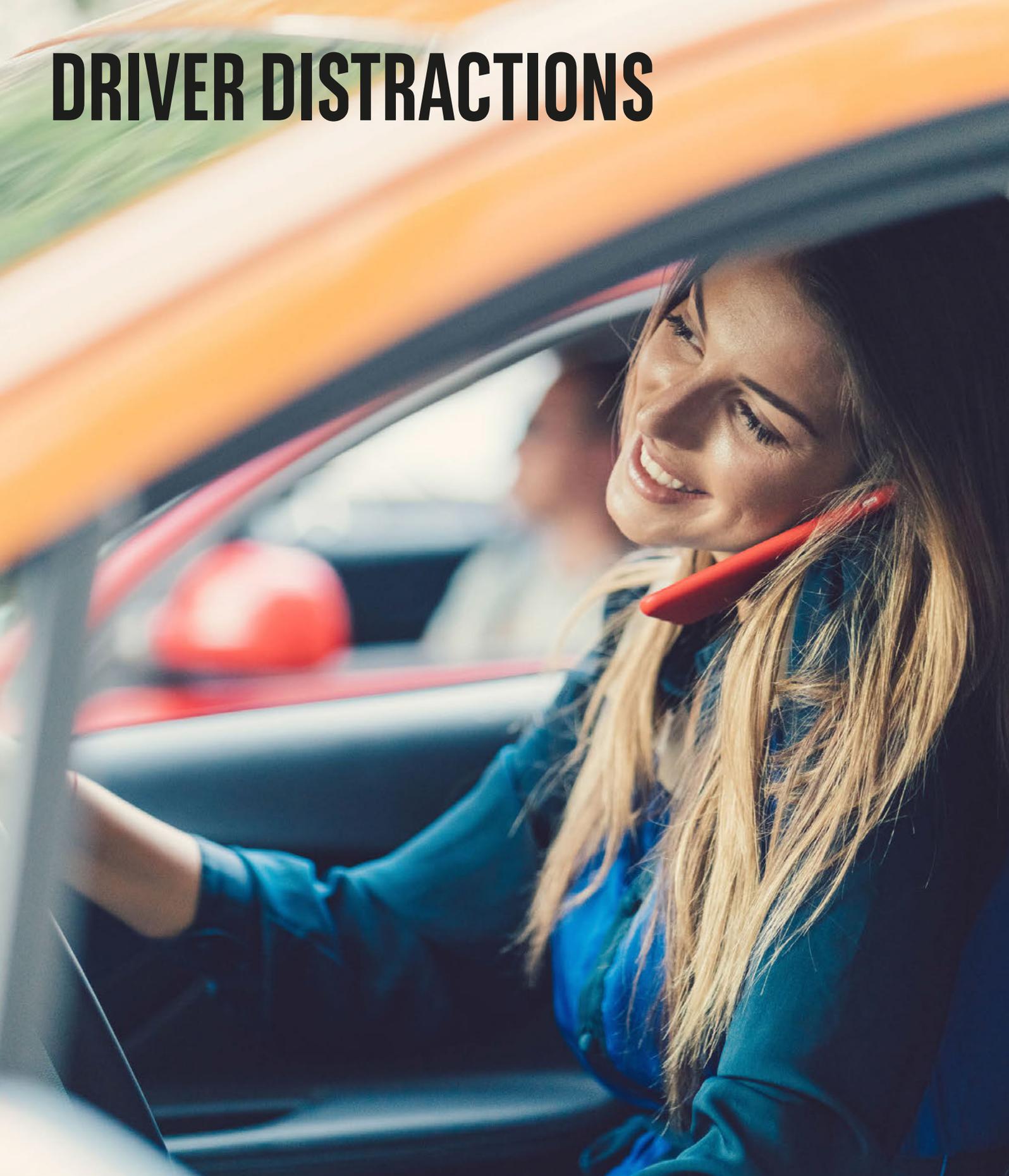


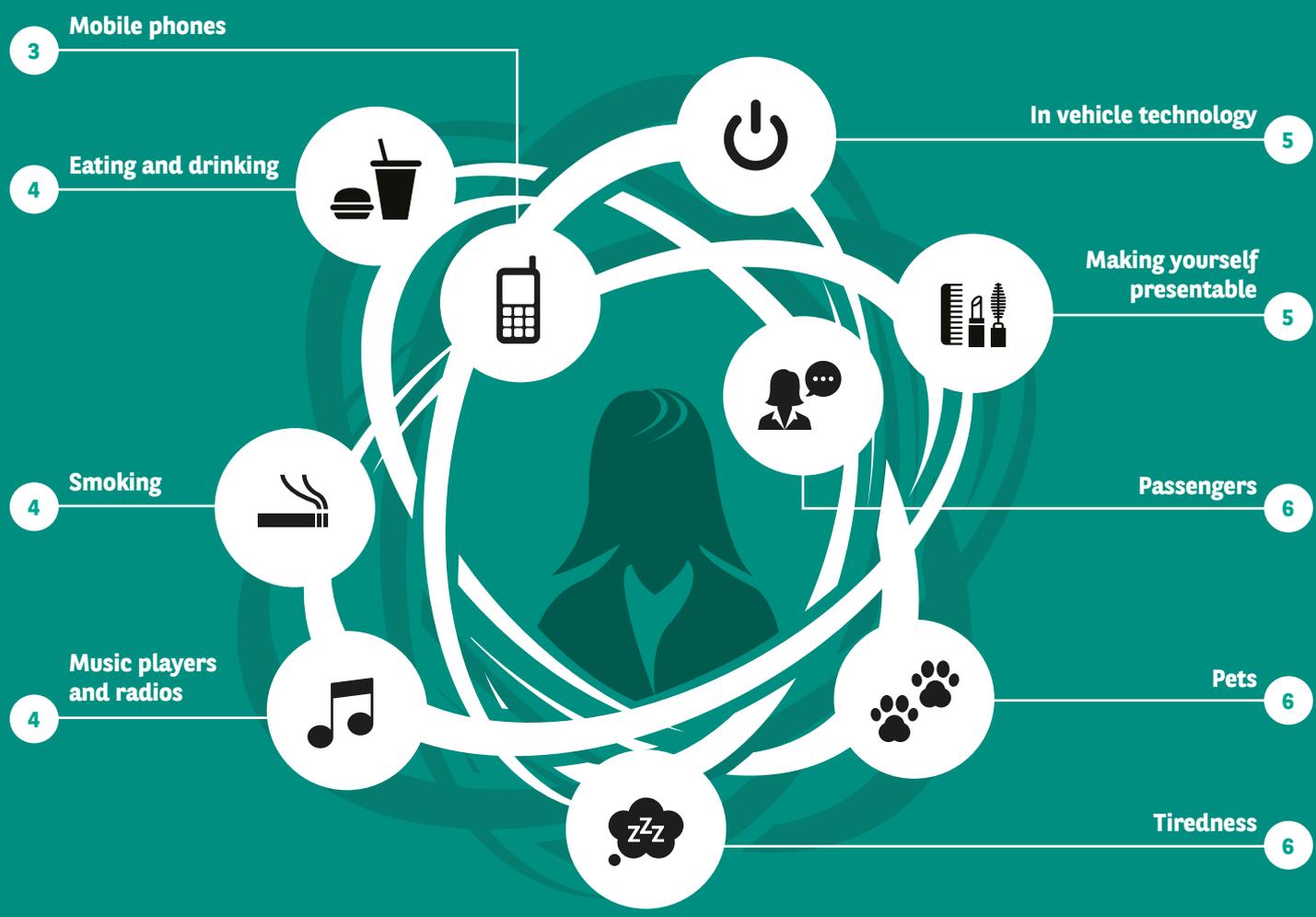
# DRIVER DISTRACTIONS



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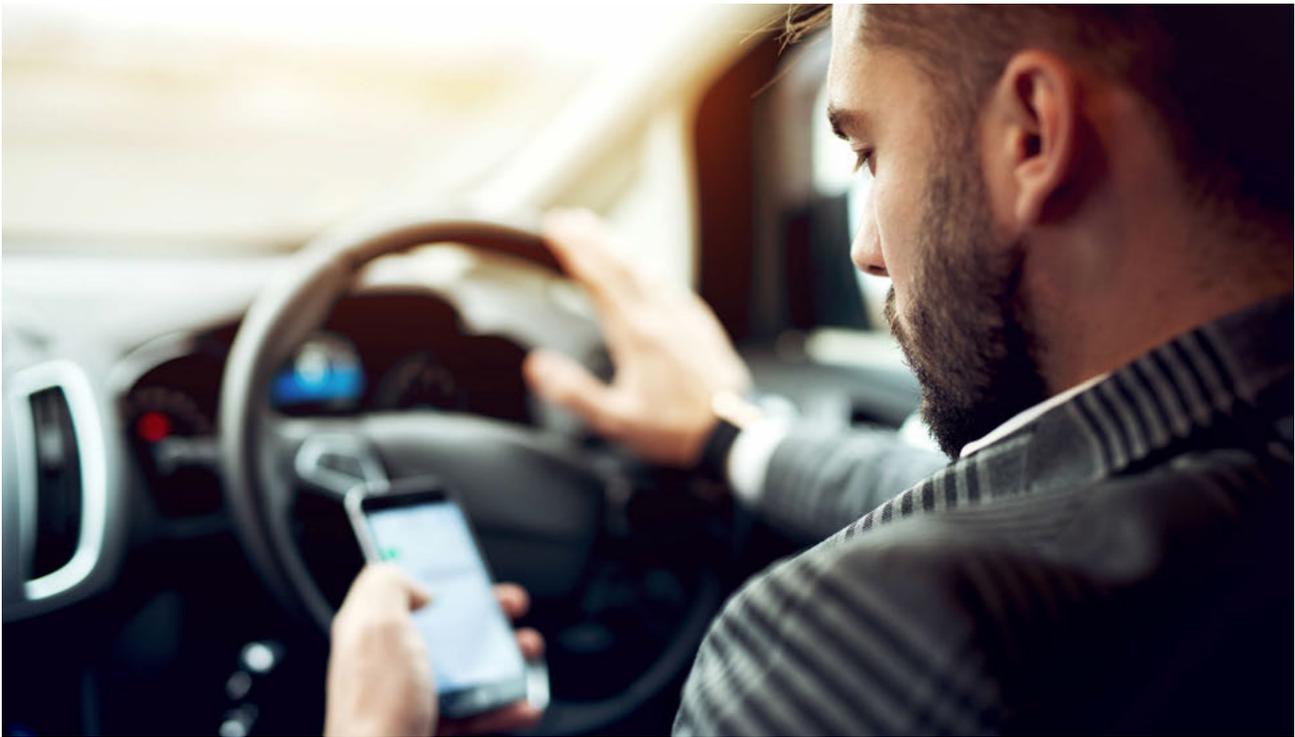
# Inside this guide:



## Driver distractions

When you're behind the wheel of a car – whether alone or with passengers – driving safely should always be your top concern. We're more distracted than ever, so it's crucial to know the basics of safe driving and practice them every time you're on the road.

Statistics and research has found that being distracted, whilst driving, increases our chance of being involved in a collision. Our guide highlights the main distractions and their possible impact.



## Mobile phones

### The law

It's illegal to use a hand-held mobile when driving.

- This includes using your mobile phone to follow a map, read a text or check social media
- And when stationary at traffic lights or queuing in traffic
- You can only use a hand-held phone if you are safely parked and your engine is switched off
- Penalties for driving when using a hand-held phone or driving carelessly/dangerously can include disqualification, a large fine and up to two years imprisonment
- If you're caught using a hand-held phone while driving, you'll get six penalty points on your licence and a fine of £200. Points on your licence will result in higher insurance costs
- If you get six points in the first two years after passing your test, you will lose your licence
- You may use a hands-free phone while driving but you can still be prosecuted if you're not in control of your vehicle. The penalties are the same as being caught using a hand-held phone.

**Please note:** although using a hands-free phone is not illegal, please check your fleet company car policy as it may prevent their use.

 **For more information please visit**  
[www.gov.uk/using-mobile-phones-when-driving-the-law](http://www.gov.uk/using-mobile-phones-when-driving-the-law)

Studies show that drivers who use a hands-free or hand-held mobile phone are slower at recognising and reacting to hazards. Even careful drivers can be distracted by a call or text – and a split-second lapse in concentration could result in a collision.

Text messaging requires visual, manual and cognitive attention from the driver; therefore it is by far the most alarming distraction.

 <http://think.direct.gov.uk/mobile-phones.html>

The effect of talking on a phone whilst driving has been shown to be worse than driving under the influence of alcohol. Drivers using a hands-free phone are 30% slower to react than those slightly over the UK limit.

*Source: Using a hands-free mobile whilst driving can be more dangerous than drink driving, Transport Research Laboratory.*



### Advice for drivers

Put your phone out of sight, earshot and reach when driving to avoid temptation, ideally by putting it in the boot. On long journeys, drivers should take regular breaks, which they can use to check messages or make calls.



## Eating and drinking

Research has found that drivers who eat and drink at the wheel are twice as likely to be involved in a collision. Eating and drinking whilst driving diverts attention away from the driving task and causes physical distraction because at least one hand is off the wheel while holding food or drink.

*Source: Crash dieting: The effects of eating and drinking on driving performance, Accident Analysis & Prevention*



## Smoking

### The law

It is illegal to smoke in a company car or van and a vehicle containing passengers under the age of 18. The law applies in England and Wales and could see both the driver and the smoker fined.

 **For more information please visit**  
[www.gov.uk/government/news/smoking-in-vehicles](http://www.gov.uk/government/news/smoking-in-vehicles)

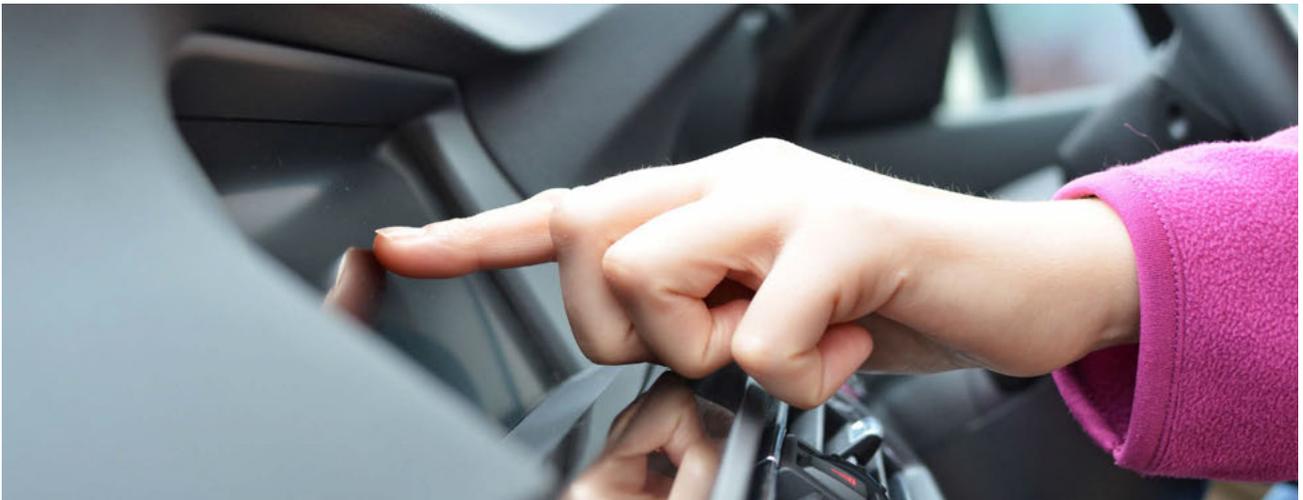
Lighting and smoking a cigarette causes a mental and physical distraction. Once lit, smoke from the cigarette may impair the driver's vision, and a lit cigarette falling into the driver's lap or onto a seat could cause further distraction and serious harm.



## Music players and radios

Listening to loud music has been found to slow drivers' reaction times, and encourages aggressive driving. It can also prevent drivers hearing what is going on around them. Adjusting the controls of radios or music players can also be very dangerous. Several studies into driver distraction have found that operating a stereo while driving leads to slower reaction times and more errors such as lane departure.

 **For more information please visit**  
[www.brake.org.uk/rsw/15-facts-a-resources/facts/1131-distractionfacts](http://www.brake.org.uk/rsw/15-facts-a-resources/facts/1131-distractionfacts)



## In vehicle technology

Many modern vehicles come equipped with technology aimed at making the driver safer or more comfortable. However, some in-vehicle technology can provide a dangerous distraction.

Devices such as cruise control (aimed at reducing the driver's workload) can also have the unintended side-effect of making drivers less attentive and more susceptible to fatigue, and can cause slower reaction times.

Some more complex vehicles now also come equipped with entertainment and communications technology that enables drivers to carry out tasks, or access a plethora of information such as servicing and tyre pressure data as well as entertainment and social media accounts.



### Advice for drivers

Engaging in communications via mobile phones and other technology at the wheel does pose a significant danger. Therefore it is strongly advised that such technology is not operated whilst driving nor fitted to your vehicle in the first instance, due to the dangerous temptation of using it.



[www.brake.org.uk/rsw/15-facts-a-resources/facts/1131-distractionfacts](http://www.brake.org.uk/rsw/15-facts-a-resources/facts/1131-distractionfacts)

## Making yourself presentable

Poor planning is often the reason why drivers make themselves presentable when driving, but can have serious consequences.

Give yourself plenty of time to brush your hair or put your make-up on before leaving the house. Keep your grooming items out of reach or pull over if necessary. The few extra minutes it will add to your commute is a small price to pay for safety.



For more information please visit  
[www.decidetodrive.org/distracted-driving-dangerous/grooming-driving/](http://www.decidetodrive.org/distracted-driving-dangerous/grooming-driving/)





## Passengers

Conversations with passengers, unlike mobile phone conversations, usually pause when the driver approaches a hazard. However, too much noise in the vehicle focuses the driver's attention towards the sound and away from the road. Drivers should keep interaction with passengers to a minimum and avoid getting drawn into in-depth conversations or heated debates.

Children are also a huge distraction in the car, often throwing tantrums or demanding food and drink. Singing songs to keep them occupied can also lead to a loss of concentration by the driver.



### Advice for drivers

Keep calm and try to relax. Pull over if necessary and help young passengers understand the responsibility of a driver.



## Pets

Driving with your pet in the car can be dangerous for both of you. Pets are a distraction and can be seriously injured or seriously injure you – if not properly restrained in a vehicle.



### Advice for drivers

- Do not allow your pet to roam freely in your vehicle. Invest in a suitable restraint such as a pet seatbelt or a pet carrier that has ample ventilation and plenty of room. Ensure it's safely in place in case you suddenly brake or are in a collision
- Feed your pet a few hours before a long trip to prevent it from getting carsick
- Do not allow your pet to stick its head out of the window. You run the risk of your animal getting injured from on-the-road debris and should you stop suddenly your pet is at greater risk of injury.



<https://www.arvalfleettoolbox.co.uk/guides/travelling-with-your-dog/everything-you-need-to-know-to-protect-man-s-best-friend-whilst-out-and-about/>



## Tiredness

Driver tiredness is one of the biggest killers on our roads causing one in five collisions.

### The law

If you kill someone as a result of tiredness, you may be charged with death by dangerous driving which has a maximum penalty of 14 years in prison.



### Advice for drivers

- Get enough sleep – too little sleep radically affects your ability to drive safely
- Inform your employer – if you are having trouble sleeping and/or you are taking medication that can make you drowsy
- Always drive carefully and calmly – working hard to identify all possible hazards ahead. This will help prevent boredom and stress and will reduce the risk of tiredness
- Stay alert on monotonous roads – be especially alert on roads such as motorways. You may be particularly at risk if you drive a vehicle with cruise control, which can make driving more comfortable and lulling
- Watch out for dangerous times – research shows that most drivers with normal sleep patterns are more likely to fall asleep between midnight–6am and 2pm–4pm
- Take regular breaks – the Government recommends that you take a break at least every two hours for at least 15 minutes.

Sources:

[www.gov.uk/using-mobile-phones-when-driving-the-law](http://www.gov.uk/using-mobile-phones-when-driving-the-law)

[www.gov.uk/government/news/smoking-in-vehicles](http://www.gov.uk/government/news/smoking-in-vehicles)

[www.brake.org.uk/RSW15-facts-a-resources/facts/1131-distractionfacts](http://www.brake.org.uk/RSW15-facts-a-resources/facts/1131-distractionfacts)

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