

A Tweet at the Wheel

/EINPresswire.com/ UK (submitpressrelease123.com - press release) The number of motorists who admit to texting whilst driving has doubled in the space of a year - while those who confess to using social media have quadrupled according to new research from Halfords.

The results – which reveal more than a third of drivers now admit to regularly checking a text, email, or accessing social media whilst at the wheel come as police forces around the UK* launch a crackdown on the use of hand-held mobile phones by motorists.

It seems our obsession with remaining in touch means the law is being flouted more than ever - thanks to the latest generation of smart phones which mean drivers are not just able to make or receive calls illegally but can look at messages and use social networks such as Facebook and Twitter.

Some 35% of drivers admitted reading text messages, rising to 57% among under 25s, whilst almost one in five (19%) have gone onto social networking sites or used the Internet survey** of 2083 drivers found.

The annual study by Halfords marks the sixth anniversary of tougher legal sanctions being introduced to discourage the use of hand-held phones, or similar devices, when driving - which saw fixed penalty fines rise to £60 and three penalty points being added to offenders' licences.

Halfords In-Car technology Manager, Dave Poulter said: "These findings paint a disturbing picture of what is happening on the UK's roads and the emerging trend towards using mobile phones to link with social media while driving is extremely worrying.

"There are a number of ways of staying connected legally – from bespoke hands-free kits, that read out text messages for you, to car stereos that incorporate hands-free capabilities as well enabling maps and traffic services to be accessed from mobiles safely."

Overall 48% of drivers admitted to taking or making a call at least once in the past 12 months and 36% confessed to committing the offence at least once a week.

Using a mobile phone without Bluetooth or a hands-free kit is deemed the third most hated behaviour on the road, after inconsiderate driving and drink driving, and 88% of those questioned agreed that the use of hand held phone while driving was a danger to themselves as well as other road users.

The analysis of official figures and Halfords on-line poll shows how routinely breaching this law has become commonplace with the number of drivers admitting to using a phone while driving now ten per cent higher than a similar survey carried out a year ago.

Just over half (53%) of motorists admit they are likely to take their eyes off the road to see who a call is from and 45% admit they would look to see who a text is from.

Yet, despite this, one in three (33%) think the police should crack down on offenders and three quarters of those questioned feel the current legislation is not properly enforced, though 24% feel it is acceptable to use phone at traffic lights or when in stationary traffic.

Dave Poulter added: "This dangerous behaviour is simply unnecessary and easily avoided through the smart use of hands-free technology. If any drivers are uncertain about how to comply with the law and the options available, our in-store specialists can offer professional advice as well as fitting."

Notes to Editors:

*Forces are currently responding to this concern with campaigns being launched in Scotland, Wales, Lancashire, Devon and Cornwall and Humberside.

**Results of Onepoll online survey conducted during January 2013 - to which 2083 drivers responded.

Counties with the biggest increase in fixed penalty notices for issued for the illegal use of mobile phones at the wheel according to Home Office Crime Figures (England and Wales) 2010/2009:

Dyfed 59.5%

Gwent 49.3%

N Yorks 49.1%

Wilts 35.9%

Surrey 26.2%

Staffs 23.3%

Sussex 14.5%

Leeds City 13.4%

Cambridge 13.2%

Warwickshire 12.5%

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