

Uneven Road Surfaces and Potholes

A driver's guide from Alphabet



According to RAC research, over 512,000 potholes were reported to local authorities in 2017, with potholes damaging a car at least every 11 minutes in the UK. The latest figures for all modes of transport showed that a 'poor or defective road surface' was a contributory factor in 6 fatal accidents 147 serious accidents and 386 slight accidents in the 2017 Department for Transport Road Casualties Report.

Potential damage and how to check your vehicle

At low speeds, hitting a deep pothole can cause damage to tyres, wheels and steering alignment but the cost of repair probably would not justify an insurance claim.

At higher speeds, hitting a deep pothole can cause severe damage and also risks loss of control which could result in impact with other vehicles, the kerb or roadside objects.

When safe to do so, stop and check your wheels and tyres after hitting a pothole. Be aware though that although damage to tyres may not be immediately apparent.

If you notice a vibration, the steering wheel doesn't 'centre' properly or it pulls to one side, it would be advisable to get the car checked at a garage or tyre specialist as faults such as tracking or steering damage can lead to later expense or even an accident.

Useful tips if you are driving on roads with potholes:

Advice to Drivers:

Keep your eyes peeled: Protect yourself and your car by keeping an eye out for potholes, particularly in wet weather when deep potholes may be hidden beneath puddles.

Maintain your distance: Leave plenty of distance between your car and the vehicle in front so you can see potholes in advance.

Stay alert: Be aware of other traffic or pedestrians on the road before changing course to avoid a pothole.

Watch your speed: Striking potholes at higher speeds can cause more damage to your vehicle.

Avoid unnecessary braking: Try not to apply your brakes when driving over a pothole. When you brake you tilt the vehicle forward placing more stress on the front suspension.

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Useful tips if you are driving on roads with potholes:

Advice to Drivers:

Drive over potholes with care: If you have to drive over a pothole, allow the wheel to roll freely into the hole.

Hold the steering wheel correctly: Make sure you are holding the steering wheel properly with the '10 to 2' hands position when driving on a road with potholes. Failure to do so may mean you lose control of your vehicle.

Safety first: If you wish to inspect any damage to your car, ensure that you stop in a safe place.

Get checked out: If you have hit a pothole and suspect your car has sustained damage, we recommend you get the vehicle checked out by your local garage. Ask them to verify if there could be any other issues such as problems with tracking and wheel alignment, tyres or suspension.

Check tyre pressure regularly: Checking your tyre pressure regularly to ensure safety as a line of defence against potholes. Recommended tyre pressures can be found in your vehicle's handbook and on the label located inside the driver's side door frame or doorpost.

How to make a claim

To make a claim for damage to your vehicle if you hit a pothole, contact Highways England (previously the Highways Agency) to tell them:

- What the damage was
- Why you think Highways England is responsible
- The specific location where the damage took place - the road name and the nearest marker post number or feature which identifies the part of the road you were on
- The date and time the damage was caused

Highways England and some councils will send out a compensation claim form. You simply fill it in and return it with copies of your evidence. Other authorities will require you to write, explaining that you are making a claim and setting out your case.

Damage report form

You'll be sent a damage report form if Highways England believes you have a valid claim. Fill it in and provide:

- Copies of estimates or invoices for repairs to your vehicle
- A current MOT certificate (if required)
- Photos of the damage if it is safe to do so

Send it to the address on Highways England damage report form. You will get a decision about your claim within 90 days.

More information

The following websites offering useful information on potholes:

The Highways England pothole page
<https://www.gov.uk/claim-for-damage-to-your-vehicle>

Pothole advice from the AA
<http://www.theaa.com/breakdown-cover/pothole-damage-how-to-claim.html>

A comprehensive and independent reference guide to claiming pothole compensation
<http://www.moneysavingexpert.com/travel/pothole-claims>

For more information please contact Alphabet on 0370 50 50 100 or visit www.alphabet.co.uk

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