

Mar 03, 2018 00:01 GMT

Diesel cars are being stricken by expensive cold weather fuel ‘waxing’ problem

Britain’s freezing cold weather has caused havoc for motorists across the country but diesel car drivers have been hit with a very unexpected and unwelcome problem, according to an analysis of RAC breakdown data.

RAC patrols yesterday attended almost 500 diesel vehicles of varying makes and ages that had experienced problems with their fuel filters becoming clogged. This represented a significant 5% of the 9,600 breakdowns the RAC dealt with on a day that saw 44% more call-outs than there should have been for the time of year, making it a real cause for concern.

Filters appear to have become blocked due to the formation of a gel-like substance in the diesel which leads to the engine being starved of fuel and either not starting or losing power. The amber engine malfunction indicator light might also show. The cost of a garage replacing a clogged diesel fuel filter could be as high as £200 depending on the vehicle.

RAC fuel spokesman Simon Williams said: “The RAC last saw issues with diesel ‘waxing’, as it is known, predominantly in the east of the UK in the very cold weather of late 2013, and to a lesser extent in periods of really cold weather since then. This should not occur as all diesel produced for UK winter use is formulated with additives to prevent waxing. In addition, modern diesel vehicles are fitted with heating elements on the fuel delivery lines to prevent waxing occurring. We are, however, aware that some vehicles’ fuel lines are more exposed than others which can exacerbate waxing issues.

“The problems seen in late 2013 led to a working group being set up to investigate the cause. The RAC is an active participant along with other breakdown service providers, motor manufacturers and representatives from the fuel industry.

“Frustratingly for motorists, however, there is still no solution to this problem. The most likely explanation appears to be that there are a combination of factors at play involving the diesel itself, its bio content, and the way vehicles move the fuel around their systems.

“Unfortunately there is nothing diesel car drivers can do to prevent the problem from occurring other than getting their vehicles’ fuel filter changed in line manufacturer guidelines and keeping their car in a garage if they can. Even then, this may not stop a problem happening out on the road.

“As a member of the working group set up across the industry to get to the bottom of this issue, the RAC is working hard to amass and analyse its breakdown data to help find a solution.”

Notes to Editors

About the RAC

First formed in 1897 the RAC has been looking after the needs of its members and championing the interests of motorists 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 motorists 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 – 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](#) or follow [#racfuelwatch on Twitter](#). RAC Fuel Watch is a comprehensive guide to the latest UK unleaded petrol and diesel prices – both at the wholesale level and at the pump. RAC Fuel Watch analyses how prices changed through the previous month and compares the most recent prices with those from three, six and 12 months before.

Key facts:

- RAC patrols fix four out of five vehicles at the roadside and on average within 30 minutes
- RAC vans carry more than 500 parts and tools to get members' vehicles going again
- 92% of members would recommend RAC Rescue to their friends and family

Contacts



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