

Oct 07, 2019 00:01 BST

‘Drivers who leave their engines on when parked should be fined’

Seven-in-10 drivers (72%) want to see councils tackle motorists who leave their engines running when parked with 44% of those saying officials should tell them to switch off and then fine them if they refuse, new RAC research* has found.

While councils already have the power to take action against drivers who idle their vehicles while parked in the form a £20** fine, only a few choose to enforce this.

A more sympathetic 26% of the 2,130 drivers surveyed by the RAC say motorists who idle their engines should just be told to switch off without being fined whereas a hard-line 2% think offenders should be fined without any warning whatsoever.

The problem of engine idling is clearly widespread as 88% of respondents said they see drivers parked at the side of a road or street with their engines still running. This consisted of 40% who regularly witness this and 48% who see it occasionally. Only 7% claim not to have seen drivers doing this; 5% weren't sure.

Most vehicles which needlessly pollute in this way are generally seen parked on the side of the road in towns and cities (30%). Worryingly though, 26% have spotted drivers doing this outside schools.

Drivers' awareness and sensitivity to the issue of engine idling also appears to be growing significantly. More than half of those surveyed (55%) say they are more concerned about the impact that vehicle emissions have on the environment and public health than they were three years ago. Forty-one per

cent said their level of concern was unchanged and only 4% said they were less concerned.

Asked if they would turn off their engines to prevent pollution if they were stationary for a few minutes in various locations, nearly two-thirds (64%) claimed they would outside schools; 62% would do so if parked at the side of an urban road or street; 53% outside a shop; and 53% in an urban car park.

When stopped in traffic however, attitudes are very different with 29% stating they would never turn off their engines no matter how long they were stuck for. For those who say they would switch their engines off when stationary in traffic, the most favoured point to do so is at five minutes (18%). Thirteen per cent would do so after just two minutes and one in 10 (11%) after three minutes, and for 15% it would be after six minutes.

There was also a notable difference in attitudes towards turning off engines when stuck in traffic in urban and rural environments: 48% say they would switch off in a town or a city whereas only 39% would do so in the countryside. Worryingly, this means 23% would not turn off in any location.

The top reason for switching off when stationary in traffic was cost rather the environment or people's health, with 37% saying they do it to save a little on fuel and 35% saying they do it when they can to help with air quality. Three in 10 (29%) however, claim it never occurs to them to turn off.

RAC head of roads policy Nicholas Lyes said:

“It is clear from our research that the vast majority of drivers are far more aware of the impact of vehicle emissions than they were three years ago. They are conscious of pollution from parked vehicles running their engines needlessly to the point they want to see local councils taking some form of action against those who do this. At the very least they would like a council official to speak to those who do it and ask them to switch off.

“Councils already have the powers to deal with this problem, but few are currently doing so. Many of the drivers we questioned would like to see some firm action taken against offenders. This is no doubt needed to bring about a change in behaviour.

“You could liken the current situation with engine idling to that of taking your own carrier bags to the supermarket: everyone knew it was the right thing to do, but few of us did it until a compulsory charge was introduced. While the law is already in place for idling, enforcement is limited, if not non-existent.

“The presence of enforcement officers and ‘no engine idling’ signs, complete with penalties, must be the next step in making our urban environments better for everyone who lives, drives and works in them.”

At the end of June this year [the Government announced that it intends to launch a public consultation looking at increasing fines for idling drivers](#).

Notes to Editors

* 2,130 members of the RAC Opinion Panel were surveyed online from 28 March to 7 April.

** www.legislation.gov.uk/ukdsi/2002/0110423887

About the RAC

The RAC provides complete peace of mind to 11m UK private and business drivers, whatever their motoring needs. Its services include:

[Breakdown assistance](#). Its highly-skilled, 1,600-strong branded patrol workforce attends more than two million breakdowns every year, fixing on average four out of five vehicles at the roadside. The RAC’s patrol fleet is one of the most advanced in the world, and was the first to roll out both an [All-Wheels-Up recovery system](#), allowing the vast majority of vehicles to be recovered from a single patrol van, and [EV Boost](#) mobile electric vehicle charging units

[Insurance](#). The RAC is a top-five [car insurance](#) broker having surpassed the 500,000 policies-in-force milestone in 2018. It also offers [‘black box’ telematics policies](#), as well as home and travel insurance

Other motoring services.The RAC leads in the development of new solutions for business, fleets, electric vehicles and future car technology. Its additional products and services include a [personal loans offering](#), a [used car buying website](#), [vehicle inspections and checks](#), [legal services](#) or up-to-the-minute [traffic and travel information](#). It also has a network of [Approved Dealers](#) and [Approved Garages](#)

The RAC also works to support the interests of its members and UK drivers on the most important motoring issues which it identifies via the annual [RAC Report on Motoring](#) and the [RAC Opinion Panel](#). The Report on Motoring is the longest running analysis of driver opinion in the UK having been published every year since 1989.

For more information about the RAC, visit the [RAC website](#).

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