



Sep 03, 2013 15:37 BST

RAC trials universal spare wheel as ‘puncture no spare’ call-outs increase by nearly 50% in a year

With the number of punctures on cars with no spare wheel rising by 44% in the last year, the RAC has begun trialling a universal spare wheel which is designed to speed up the fix time and minimise inconvenience for members.

In the 12 months up to August 2012, the RAC responded to 87,000 breakdowns involving a puncture on a vehicle with no spare, and in the 12 months ending in August 2013 this increased to approximately 120,000.

The 'disappearance' of the spare wheel has arisen as a result of car manufacturers seeking to improve fuel economy and reduce carbon dioxide emissions by lessening vehicle weights. As spare wheels are relatively heavy (often weighing as much as 25kg-30kg), removing them from a standard vehicle and making them an optional extra has become increasingly common with manufacturers.

And, with car manufacturers obliged to ensure that average new car emissions do not exceed 130g of CO2 per kilometre by 2015 and 95g by 2020, the spare wheel is unlikely to make a comeback in the foreseeable future.

Although manufacturers provide a tyre inflation kit in place of a spare wheel, these are only suitable for carrying out temporary repairs on punctures up to 4mm and can be daunting to use at the side of the road. RAC patrols attending these breakdowns would firstly try to fix the puncture and, if this was not possible, would then either collect and fit a new tyre or, alternatively, tow the member to the nearest garage, both of which can be time-consuming.

However, with the RAC 'universal' spare wheel, which fits the majority of cars that don't have a spare wheel fitted as standard, a quick and effective solution is possible, saving members time. RAC patrols will fit the wheel quickly and liaise with the nearest ATS Euromaster centre on their behalf to find out what replacements are available. Payment can be taken at the roadside by the RAC patrol, ensuring the customer can drive straight to ATS Euromaster, or book a mobile fitting at their convenience. The RAC will then arrange collection of the spare directly from ATS, avoiding any further hassle.

Developed with specialist manufacturer Dynomec working in partnership with tyre expert ATS Euromaster, the five-stud, 17in lightweight alloy multi-fit wheel fits a high proportion of vehicles and will significantly cut down the time spent by members at the roadside, often in potentially dangerous situations such as on the hard shoulder of motorways. Trials are taking place in South West England and Northern Ireland with some 200 patrols carrying the new wheel.

Head of RAC technical operations Phil Ryan said:

"The Dynomec universal spare wheel demonstrates how the RAC is at the

forefront of providing innovative solutions to help our individual members and business customers get back on the road as quickly as possible after they break down.

“We understand why motor manufacturers need to reduce the weight of their vehicles in order to make them more fuel efficient and to meet EU carbon dioxide emissions targets and removal of the spare wheel helps them to achieve this.

“But drivers should not suffer as a result, and in order to minimise the disruption and inconvenience that punctures can cause, the universal spare wheel provides additional options for patrols to deal with breakdowns more quickly and effectively. We are already seeing very positive results from the trials and we expect the universal wheel to become an increasingly common sight on our roads.”

Columba Zaal, ATS Euromaster’s group operations director, explained: “We too have noticed a surge in the number of calls our centres receive from drivers stranded with a tyre failure and no spare. The industry needed to respond to this growing problem, and it made sense for us to partner with the RAC to jointly develop a mobility proposition for motorists.

Zaal added: “All of our centres carry an extensive range of premium, mid-range and budget tyres, so we are confident we can get the majority of customers back on the road quickly. In the event that a specific tyre is not available on the shelf, we can arrange to attend any non-roadside location, such as a member’s home or place of work, on a same or next-day basis. Operating the largest mobile tyre fitting fleet in the business is a key advantage.”

The RAC believes its universal spare wheel is set to be a welcome sight for both individual and corporate members as well as being a major benefit for business customers such as fleet managers who will be able to get their vehicles back on the road more quickly, saving both time and money.

About the RAC

First formed in 1897, the RAC has been looking after the needs of its

members and championing the interests of drivers 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 drivers 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 – is one of a kind and 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](#). It provides a comprehensive guide to the latest UK unleaded petrol and diesel prices – both at the wholesale level and at the pump - and tracks these prices daily to help drivers check if the price they pay to fill up is a fair one.

Contacts



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