



Jul 31, 2015 00:01 BST

Two-thirds of motorists heading abroad don't know what number to ring for help in an emergency

999? 111? 112? Motorists confused over what to dial and when

UK drivers venturing to the continent this summer could find themselves in difficulty after new data shows that most don't know the three-digit phone number to call the emergency services when in the European Union.

Each year Brits take nearly six million trips in their own cars across the

Channel* with the majority doing so in the summer months. Yet worryingly, nearly two-thirds (62%) of motorists surveyed by RAC European Breakdown** don't know the correct number to dial for pan-European emergency assistance, with just 38% saying they would call 112.

Ten per cent of respondents thought that they could dial 111 in an emergency while in Europe – this is the NHS non-emergency line in the UK – while 6% said they would call 911, the emergency number for the United States and Canada, to seek help. And 5% said they thought 101 was the number to call, when that is actually the UK non-emergency police line.

RAC European breakdown operations manager David Huggon said: “We all recognise 999 as the main emergency phone number in the UK, but it appears that once we've left the country we leave our knowledge of who to ring in an emergency behind too.

“The 112 number works right across the EU, including the UK. But it doesn't get a lot of promotion – certainly not in Britain, where we have 999 anyway, but not a great deal in continental Europe either, although electronic motorway signage in some countries including France is used to remind drivers. So as well as having a quality European breakdown policy in place, motorists driving abroad would do well to keep a note of this emergency number handy.

“Drivers need not be concerned about language barriers either, as in many cases dialling 112 will put you through to an English-speaking call handler while abroad.”

Aside from a lack of publicity about 112 this side of the Channel, the RAC also believes that newer three-digit phone numbers in the UK might be causing some people to mix their numbers up.

David continued: “The 101 and 111 phone numbers were introduced in the UK to make it easier for people to remember how to contact the police and NHS in a non-emergency situation, but when you factor in 112 as well, it appears that people are getting confused over which number to dial.

“Each year, the RAC attends thousands of summer breakdowns in continental Europe, with the majority taking place in France. But while buying a

comprehensive breakdown policy for a driving trip abroad should be on the to-do list for every driver leaving the UK, our data shows it is a good idea to remember 112, too.”

Know your numbers

Phone number	What it's for	Where it works
112	Emergency assistance line	All of the European Union
999	Emergency assistance line	United Kingdom
911	Emergency assistance line	All of North America
101	Police non-emergency assistance line	United Kingdom
111	NHS non-emergency assistance line	England and Scotland, and Wales from October 2015***

Driving abroad is popular with Britons, with the flexibility of taking a car and the enjoyment of motoring on the continent cited as the two of the biggest reasons over taking another form of transport. The RAC offers a [wide range of advice to motorists](#) taking their own vehicle to continental Europe, as well as [Defaqto five-star rated](#) comprehensive European breakdown cover. For more information, visit www.rac.co.uk/breakdown-cover/european-breakdown-cover.

Ends

Notes to Editors

*Source: ONS, Travel Trends <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/ott/travel-trends/2014/index.html>. Latest available figures for 2014 indicate 5.987 million private vehicles visits to Europe

**Source: RAC Motorists' Panel, July 2015

***NHS Direct Wales currently operates in Wales (0845 46 47), but is anticipated to switch to 111 in October 2015

The non-emergency police number 101 was phased in from 2009, and 111 for reaching the NHS in a non-emergency situation came in during 2014.

Research by UK region

What phone number would you dial in the EU for emergency assistance?

	England	Wales	Scotland	Northern Ireland
101	6%	4%	0%	0%
111	10%	8%	8%	17%
112	38%	33%	33%	33%
911	5%	8%	10%	0%
999	1%	0%	3%	0%
Don't know	40%	46%	46%	50%

Notes to Editors

About the RAC

With more than eight million members, the RAC 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, including advancing levels of road safety, supporting the needs of young drivers and voicing concerns about the increasing cost of motoring. The RAC's annual [Report on Motoring](#) provides a clear insight into the concerns and issues facing today's motorists.

For the very latest news on UK fuel prices visit our [Fuel Prices Explained pages](#), or check [#racfuelwatch on Twitter](#). We detail the average UK price of

petrol and diesel and give an indication of which way prices are likely to go – up or down – over the next couple of weeks based on the wholesale price. You can also discover more about the fuel industry, what affects UK fuel prices, how they compare to those in Europe, how motorists are taxed and top tips for better fuel economy.

The RAC supports FairFuelUK which campaigns for fairer taxes on petrol and diesel. Show support and find out more at www.fairfueluk.com.

Key facts:

- RAC patrols fix four out of five vehicles at the roadside and on average within 34 minutes
- 98% of members would recommend RAC Rescue to their friends and family

Contacts



RAC Press Office

Press Contact

press.office@rac.co.uk

Emails monitored during normal office hours. For breakdown queries, call 0330 159 0740

ISDN number on request