

Health & safety guidance for voluntary bat roost visitors: driving

What are the hazards?

There are a number of factors which can increase the risk of injury whilst driving, including:

- Driving and using a mobile phone.
- Driving when tired, eg after a long day at work or after a late evening roost visit.
- Driving long distances without breaks.
- Driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

The following potential outcomes could occur if the risks associated with driving are not addressed:

- Death or major injury caused by driving without due care and attention.
- Imprisonment or fines for causing death or serious injury to others whilst driving and using a mobile phone.

Managing the risks

All drivers MUST:

- Have a valid driving licence for the type / class of vehicle they are driving. Driving licence photo cards have to be renewed every ten years.
- Seek advice, via DVLA, or their GP if they have (or think they have) a medical condition or disability that could have an impact on driving or travel.
- Inform Natural England if they are aware of a medical condition or disability which might

affect their ability to volunteer safely, including travelling to roost visits.

- Inform their insurers that their vehicle will be used for the purpose of volunteering.

Adverse weather conditions

The chances of an accident or breakdown are increased during the winter as the weather can change suddenly and severely.

- Check local weather forecasts before starting any official journeys as weather warnings indicate how bad the conditions are likely to be.
- Do not start journeys when weather conditions are extreme or when a severe weather warning has been given.
- Where journeys are not essential re-schedule visits, especially if you will need to use untreated roads.

If you must drive:

- Be prepared for the conditions, think about taking additional warm clothes, boots, a spade or shovel, a torch and a fully charged mobile phone.
- If you do get into trouble because of the weather, all the motoring organisations advise you to stay with your vehicle until help arrives. If you have to leave your vehicle to get help make sure it can be seen by other vehicles because abandoned cars can cause problems for rescue vehicles and snowploughs.

Breakdowns and incidents

The driver of a vehicle is legally responsible for its road-worthiness whilst the vehicle is on a public highway. The Highway Code has several pages on the actions to be taken if you breakdown or are involved in an incident.

Driver tiredness

Driving when tired may be the main factor in around 10% of all accidents. To stop this:

- know your limitations;
- recognise early symptoms of driver fatigue, including irritation at minor delays and the behaviour of other road users.

If you are becoming tired or feel unwell:

- pull over;
- have a break away from the wheel of the car;
- drink plenty of fluids (non-alcoholic);
- take a short nap or break (minimum 15 minutes).

Mobile phones

It is illegal to use a hand-held mobile phone when driving – this includes stopping and making or taking a call with the vehicle engine running.

Fitness to drive

Drugs, both illegal and prescriptive, can impair driving skills and volunteers must not drive whilst under their influence. The law does not make a distinction between illegal use, or misuse, of drugs and over-the-counter or prescription drugs taken as directed by a medical practitioner.

Additional guidance

- [‘Tiredness can kill – Advice for drivers’](#) (DVLA document INF159).
- [‘How to drive in snow and icy weather’](#) (BBC News Advice).

Reporting an incident

You must report any accident, near miss or incident which occurs whilst performing or travelling to / from a roost visit to Natural England as soon as possible:

- Contact the Natural England ‘near miss and incident reporting line’ at any time on 0300 060 0100.
- If the incident results in injury to another person or damage to property please also contact: Martin Rhodes 0300 060 2676 or Lucy Foster 0300 060 0666.

Feedback

If you have any feedback about this guidance or would like to see additions / amendments please get in touch by emailing:

batvolunteers@naturalengland.org.uk

Further information

Please see our website page and other VBRV health and safety leaflets at:

[Health and safety for voluntary bat roost visitors](#)
[Publications for voluntary bat roost visitors.](#)

Natural England Technical Information Notes are available to download from the Natural England website: www.naturalengland.org.uk.

For further information contact the Natural England Enquiry Service on 0300 060 0863 or e-mail enquiries@naturalengland.org.uk.

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