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RAC Foundation welcomes launch of "Drive Green Drive Safely"

The RAC Foundation believes that attitudes to car buying are changing, following a motorist survey conducted by the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders.

Published to support the launch of a guide called Drive Green Drive Safely today (24), the survey revealed that safety and fuel economy take precedence over performance and top speed, once motorists have decided on budget.

Twenty three percent of motorists said that safety features would be the issue which most influenced their purchase, and 18% said fuel economy was their priority. Only 3.8% said high performance would be their main motivator.

The RAC Foundation welcomes the news that motorists are giving fuel economy a higher priority. Buying a fuel efficient car is good for the planet, as its carbon dioxide emissions are lower, and good for the wallet:-

- Choosing the most fuel efficient 4x4 saves £430 over a year on fuel alone
- Choosing the most fuel efficient MPV saves £330 over a year
- Choosing the most fuel efficient small car saves £200 over a year

The survey found that younger drivers (17 - 24) were most likely to specify a car with low emissions - but this group were also the keenest on high performance, showing that cars need to be "lean and mean" as well as green if they are to capture this market.

Older drivers (55+) were only one quarter as likely as the younger group to look for a model with low emissions. However, 25% of the over 55's said fuel economy was the most important influence on their decision.

Women gave safety a higher priority than men - 26% of women compared with 28% of men; but there was no difference between the sexes on fuel efficiency, with 18% of women and men putting this at the top of their list.

Edmund King, executive director of the RAC Foundation, said "Not everyone can switch to a hybrid or electric vehicle - but every motorist can do their bit for the environment by looking for the "best in class" when they choose their next car. "Safety has risen up the consumer agenda thanks to the clearly-understood Euro NCAP testing programme and grading system. Consumers need equally clear information about the environmental performance of different cars to help them make the connection between the personal savings from choosing a more fuel-efficient models and the environmental benefits.



"It's a real win-win situation, but it can be difficult for motorists to see the wood from the trees when trying to make an environmentally friendly transport choice. The green eco-labelling system has been a big step in the right direction, and the "Drive Green Drive Safely" guide will further help motorists to make greener choices and play their part in cutting carbon emissions."

Traffic on our roads contributes 26 per cent of the UK's total carbon dioxide emissions (CO₂), one of the greenhouse gases most associated with Climate Change. Emissions from transport can be reduced by improving the fuel efficiency of vehicles; by reducing journey lengths; and by using alternative fuels like biofuels.

Driving more carefully also cuts dangerous emissions by cutting fuel consumption.

The RAC Foundation's top tips for greener driving:

1. Plan your journey carefully to avoid congestion, roadworks and getting lost. Allow plenty of time for the trip. Never drive for more than two hours without taking a break.
2. Check your tyre pressure regularly; under inflated tyres wear out more quickly and can increase fuel consumption by up to three per cent.
3. Drive defensively - avoiding harsh acceleration and heavy braking where possible. Pulling away too fast uses up to 60 per cent more fuel.
4. Use the gearbox efficiently - changing gear at a more modest engine speed can reduce fuel consumption by up to 15 per cent.
5. Drive off immediately when starting from cold - idling to heat the engine wastes fuel and causes rapid engine wear.
6. Avoid short journeys - a cold engine uses almost twice as much fuel, while catalytic converters can take five miles to become effective. Take a walk in the fresh air to the local shops instead.
7. Stick to speed limits and make your fuel go further - driving at 70mph uses up to 30 per cent more fuel than at 50mph.
8. If you are stuck in a jam, switch off - turning off the engine after two minutes will save fuels and cut all emissions.