



How to protect your vehicle from being damaged by potholes

With the number of potholes significantly on the rise on UK roads, read our guide below for tips on how to best protect your vehicle from being damaged.

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Staying Safe on Damaged Roads

With recent research showing that almost 28% of drivers have had an accident or near-miss because of a pothole, it is important to be prepared for dealing with potholes safely in order to keep both you and your car unharmed.

What are potholes?

Potholes are holes in the roadway that vary in shape and size and are a result of water and traffic being present at the same time. Water weakens soil beneath the pavement, while traffic applies pressure that causes the pavement to crack and become unstable.

What causes potholes?

The UK's road surfaces are deteriorating due to a combination of being extremely busy and historically harsh winters with high rainfall, which has caused small crater-like cracks and holes in the asphalt of the roads.

Potholes are costing drivers an extortionate £1.7 billion in repairs to their cars per year and the reduced public infrastructure means that the amount spent by local authorities on repairs to roads is also rising.

More than a third of drivers have suffered damage to their vehicle due to potholes, with tyres and suspensions being affected the most.

What can drivers do to avoid potholes?

- Stay on the lookout for potholes at all times. (Of course, as a responsible driver, you should always be wary of any potential hazards on the roads.) This means leaving enough space between you and the driver in front so you can see potholes well in advance.
- Swerving to avoid a pothole can be dangerous for other road users, so try to give yourself enough time to check if it's safe to move out to avoid a crater.
- If you can't avoid a pothole, try to slow down before driving over it. Driving over it slowly will reduce the likelihood of damaging your vehicle and losing control. Also, it's not good to brake when crossing a pothole, as this, too, can cause damage by shooting the car forward.
- To ensure you maintain control, hold the steering wheel firmly in the correct position (if the wheel was a clock face, your hands should be at '10' and '2').
- Remember that if there has been heavy rain recently, the pothole may be filled with water. If you're suspicious about a puddle on the road, it's best to try to avoid it.
- Measure your tyre pressure to make sure each one is within the recommended range. Properly inflated tyres are less likely to be damaged by potholes.
- If, after hitting a pothole, you notice your steering wheel isn't centring properly or the car is pulling to one side, these are signs that your wheel alignment has been affected. Take your car into a garage to be checked over as soon as you can.
- If a pothole manages to puncture your tyre and it goes flat, then you will need to pull over to change your tyre. If you're unsure how to change a flat tyre, you can always call for assistance if you have breakdown cover. Only attempt to change the tyre if you're confident how to do it, have all the necessary equipment (including a jack, wrench, gloves, a torch (if it's dark), and a reflective jacket), and have a safe place to do so away from traffic (never change your tyre at the side of a busy road or on the hard shoulder of a motorway).