All about potholes – including how to report them to make a claim

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Potholes – Enemies of car wheels, tyres and suspension systems. Photograph © Kim Henson.

Helpful advice from Sam Sheehan, motoring editor at online used car retailer cinch: https://www.cinch.co.uk/

(Mercedes-Benz models on cinch: https://www.cinch.co.uk/used-cars/mercedes-benz)

Sam tells us:

(All words from Sam Sheehan at cinch; photograph © Kim Henson).

Potholes: How You Can Protect Your Car from Damage and Stay Safe

According to the RAC, there are currently more than one million potholes in the UK. So, if you've never driven over a pothole, you may be considered a particularly lucky driver.

Potholes are generally caused by rainfall and freezing temperatures but can expand over time with more harsh weather and the weight of passing traffic.

And they can cause serious damage to your car.

That's why the government has committed £500 million in 2025 to road maintenance and to fix one million potholes each year.

But in the meantime, cinch, the UK's biggest online used car retailer, has put together a guide to everything you need to know about potholes.

- The government's plan to tackle potholes
- The dangers of potholes
- Dealing with pothole damage to your car
- How to report potholes in the UK

Keep reading to find out more.

The government's plan to tackle potholes in the UK

A £500 million budget has been allocated for road maintenance in 2025, aimed at tackling the persistent pothole problem in the UK.

The government has also committed to repairing one million potholes annually to improve the overall quality of the road network.

Chancellor of the Exchequer Rachel Reeves emphasised that potholes are a 'reminder of our failure to invest as a nation' and vowed to improve road conditions in both urban and rural areas.

Understanding the dangers of potholes

The most common damage caused by potholes is to your car's tyres, wheels and suspension.

And, although thankfully much less common, swerving to avoid potholes or the car/driver becoming unsettled by driving over a pothole can lead to more serious consequences.

Damage caused by a pothole can cost you hundreds of pounds, if not thousands if you drive a premium car like a used Mercedes.

Hitting a pothole head-on can damage the suspension system, which will be one of the costliest repairs. The cost of suspension repairs will vary, but the average is around £134.

Punctures and tyre blowouts are also commonly caused by potholes, with Checkatrade reporting it can cost from £45 all the way up to £250 for a new tyre (depending on the brand and the car).

So, before we've even spoken about wheel balancing, misalignment and damaged alloys, the cost to repair damage caused by a pothole could easily go over £200.

But all isn't lost, and you might be able to get some (if not all) of that money back.

What to do if your car is damaged by a pothole

First and foremost, you should check if your car is safe to continue driving.

Next, if your car's been damaged due to a pothole, you may be eligible to claim compensation. Here's what you need to do:

- Find out whether the road is managed by National Highways (A-roads and motorways), the local council (most other roads), or Transport for London (red routes in London)
- Contact whoever manages the road with a description of the damage, the date and time it happened, the location of the incident, and why you believe the organisation is liable
  It can be a lengthy process, and you'll need to keep hold of quotes for recovery (if necessary) and repairs to share with the organisation that manages the road.

It's also worth sharing your most recent MOT certificate as proof your car was in good condition before the damage from the pothole.

How to report potholes in the UK

It's worth reporting potholes to the local authorities to make them aware of the problem and help avoid damage to other cars in the future.

Potholes can also be a potentially more serious hazard for motorcyclists, cyclists and pedestrians.

Here's what you need to do.

Reporting in England and Wales

If you're out on the roads in England and Wales and discover a pothole, you can report it to your local council by entering your postcode on the government's website.

If the pothole is on a motorway or a road, you should contact Highways England on their

number – 0300 123 5000 (available 24/7) – or via email info@highwaysengland.co.uk.

Sam Sheehan, motoring editor at cinch, says: “The government actively encourages people to report potholes as it helps speed up repairs.

“It makes the council’s job easier and keeps motorists and pedestrians safer – a win-win.”

Reporting in Scotland and Northern Ireland

In Northern Ireland you will need to visit NI Direct and mark the pothole on a map, and you’ll be able to keep track of repairs here too.

Just keep in mind that some roads and footways are not publicly maintained so it might only be a private party that can fix the pothole(s).

Meanwhile, in Scotland you will need to contact your local council.

Staying informed: pothole maps and resources

At the start of 2024, the RAC released a free app, Stan, that allows users to record the locations of potholes and other road defects, helping councils identify exactly where repairs are needed.

The app is available on both iPhone and Android devices, and the RAC hope it will give a better idea of the condition of UK roads (and help to improve them).

Keeping our roads safe together

The maintenance and safety of roads in the UK is a collective responsibility.

By reporting poor road conditions, avoiding roads that have been flagged as having a pothole, and always driving safely, road safety will be improved.

And with the newly announced Budget from the government, here’s to hoping for safer roads in the UK in the very near future.