

expire, to get the renewal message across. But a spokesman admitted this was the limit of the DVLA's publicity. Experts say many drivers will slip through the net because DVLA records are inaccurate and many motorists have changed address, making it impossible to trace them.

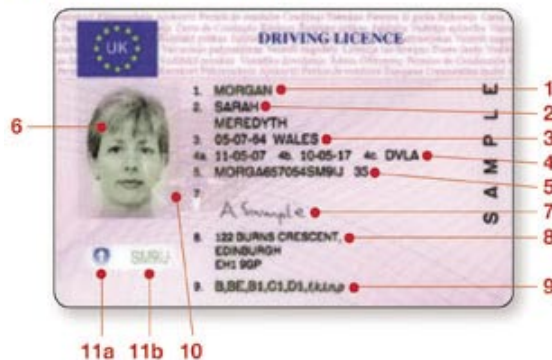
A DVLA spokesman said: "Previous experience has shown that widescale publicity is less effective and can generate enquiries and concerns from those not affected. Instead, DVLA focussed on targeted publicity to ensure that we got the message to the right person at the right time."

The Driving Standards Agency is allowing L-test candidates with out-of-date photo card licences to sit their driving tests as long as they provide a valid passport. This concession will end in January next year, raising the prospect that some L-test candidates will be turned away.

The DVLA said no one had so far been charged with failing to surrender a licence.

The new photocard driving licence, which is made entirely from polycarbonate, has a number of enhanced security features that weren't available on the older version.

Front of Driving Licence



One of the main differences between the two is the current photocard has a black and white photo while the older version had a colour one. This is because the laser technology used to burn the image onto the card producing a black and white photo is more secure. A colour photo will still need to be provided with your application to be stored on your driver record.

On the back, is a new security feature in the shape of a steering wheel. The colour of the wheel changes from green to gold depending on how you tilt the licence. More info from www.direct.gov.uk

Foreign drivers face £900 roadside fines

Foreign drivers will have to pay on-the-spot fines of up to £900 for flouting traffic laws under new legislation to be introduced next month.

If they do not have enough cash or a working credit card their vehicles will be clamped until they pay - and they will face an additional £80 release fee.

The law will also apply to British residents who cannot prove at the roadside that they have a valid address in Britain.

The fines will be described officially as "deposits" when introduced on April 1 because the money would be refunded if the driver went to court and was found not guilty. In practice, very few foreign drivers are likely to return to Britain to contest their cases.

Foreign drivers are rarely prosecuted because police cannot take action against them if they fail to respond to a summons. Instead, officers often merely give verbal warnings.

Three million foreign-registered vehicles enter Britain each year. Polish vehicles account for 36%, French vehicles for 10% and German vehicles for 9%.

Foreign vehicles are 30 per cent likelier to be in a crash than a British-registered vehicle, according to research by London Councils. The number of crashes

caused by foreign vehicles increased by 47 per cent between 2002 and 2007. There were almost 400 deaths and serious injuries and 3,000 slight injuries from accidents involving foreign vehicles in 2007. According to one estimate, foreign drivers commit 44,000 offences on British roads.

The new law is partly intended to tackle the problem of foreign lorry drivers ignoring limits on weight and hours at the wheel and driving with faulty brakes. Foreign lorries are three times more likely per mile travelled to be in a collision than British lorries, according to an insurance industry study in 2007. Recent spot checks at Holyhead, in Anglesey, found that three quarters of lorries that failed safety tests were registered overseas.

Inspectors from the Vehicle and Operator Services Agency, which enforces lorry safety rules, will have the same powers as police to demand payment of deposits and to clamp the vehicles of non-payers. The standard deposit for a careless driving offence, including driving too close to the vehicle in front or reading a map at the wheel, will be £300. Deposits for speeding offences and using hand-held mobile phones will be £60, in line with existing fixed penalties. Drivers observed committing more than one offence will pay a maximum of £900 at the roadside. Foreign drivers will not have penalty points added to their licences, however, in contrast to British drivers.