Electric vehicle safety london

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SHARE

There are around 456,000 zero-emission battery EVs on the UK’s roads. According to estimates from the RAC, in the region of 77,000 EVs were registered in 2022 alone, along with over 348,000 plug-in hybrids. With no new petrol and diesel cars and vans to be sold in the UK after 2030, and with hybrid sales banned from 2035, the push to get drivers into cleaner vehicles is now stronger than ever.

Types of vehicles include:

The emergence of EVs has led to a number of unique safety concerns, not least those around fire and explosion. The main danger occurs when the lithium-ion battery is damaged. This might happen if it is exposed to extreme heat or if something penetrates the battery cell wall. Risks around charging and electricity associated with high-voltage circuits and batteries must also be considered.

Important areas to think about include:

Whilst there is no specific workplace health and safety legislation that specifically applies to EVs, the general requirements of Sections 2 and 3 of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 apply to employers in respect of ensuring, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety of employees and those not in employment who may be affected by the activities of the employer.

In premises where the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (or equivalent legislation in Scotland and Northern Ireland) applies, the fire safety management strategy should consider practical passive, active, and managerial control measures as part of the fire risk assessment for the premises when selecting and designing areas for use as electric charging points.

The assessment should also include the suitability of the location for charging and the nature of the equipment for the intended purpose, since it must be installed in the immediate vicinity of vehicles.

In addition, the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998 are applicable to a vehicle used at work, and in respect of electrical safety in relation to work, the Electricity at Work Regulations 1989 apply both to the electrical safety of the vehicle and of any associated charging equipment or infrastructure.

Fire and the electrical risks associated with charging means extra consideration needs to be given to ensure employees who are provided with EVs, maintain them, or who drive them for work, are informed of the

particular issues.

The lithium-ion batteries used for powering EVs can be liable to damage through overheating. The electrolyte liquid contained in lithium-ion batteries is flammable and can burn at extremely high temperatures, releasing large amounts of toxic gas. The intensity of the fire, combined with the relatively lower experience rescue teams have with EVs, means that such fires can take a long time to extinguish.

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