

Britain gears up to watch TV in self-driving cars

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Motorists can sit back and watch TV once self-driving cars are approved on British roads but will be banned from using handheld mobile phones, government plans revealed Wednesday.

The Department for Transport set out changes to The Highway Code to "help ensure the first wave of [self-driving](#) vehicles are used safely".

A DfT spokesman confirmed that in self-driving mode, users would not be responsible for crashes, handing the baton to insurers.

However "motorists must be ready to resume control in a timely way if they are prompted to—such as when they approach motorway exits", said a DfT statement.

The government hopes to have a full regulatory framework in place by 2025.

Changes would allow drivers to view content unrelated to driving "on built-in display screens, while the self-driving vehicle is in control.

"It will, however, still be illegal to use mobile phones in self-driving mode, given the greater risk they pose in distracting drivers as shown in research," the statement added.

The plans come in the wake of recent similar proposals by the US National Road Safety Agency.

In Britain, development of self-driving vehicles could create 38,000 jobs worth almost £42 billion (\$55 billion) to the economy by 2035, the DfT said.

The regulatory changes are "a major milestone in our safe introduction of self-driving vehicles, which will revolutionize the way we travel, making our future journeys greener, safer and more reliable", Transport Minister Trudy Harrison said Wednesday.

At the end of last year, Chinese authorities approved the use of "robotaxis" on the streets of Beijing.

While the vehicles drive themselves, a taxi company employee must sit in the front of each car should sudden intervention be required.

Responding to Britain's proposals, Steve Gooding—director of UK motoring research body RAC Foundation—said driverless cars "promise a future where death and injury on our roads are cut significantly".

The DfT claimed the new technology could improve [road safety](#) across the UK by reducing [human error](#), a factor in 88 percent of the nation's recorded [road collisions](#).

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