



## Smart Motorways

The latest design motorways are known as **SMART** motorways – but are drivers using them correctly?

Smart motorways have been put in place to increase traffic capacity without having to widen existing carriageways.

They use active traffic management (ATM) techniques to increase capacity by use of variable speed limits and hard shoulder running at busy times.

### The facts:

- Regional control centres use CCTV, Detection Technology and variable message signs to manage smart motorways
- Depending on the type of motorway, speed restrictions can be set and lanes closed if there's an incident or congestion
- Overhead and large nearside information signs are used to warn you about queuing traffic and speed limits as well as to close lanes and divert traffic in the event of an incident
- New digital speed cameras are widely used to enforce variable speed limits across all four lanes
- On a smart motorway you'll find 'Emergency Refuge Areas' (ERA) at regular intervals. Covered by cameras but not always by detection technology



### 3 Types of Smart Motorway

- **Controlled motorway** – multiple lanes, variable speed limits and a hard shoulder for use in emergencies only e.g. western section of M25
- **Dynamic Hard Shoulder Running** – variable speed limits and a hard shoulder that can be opened as a running lane at busy times. Overhead signs tell you when you may drive on the 'hard shoulder' e.g. M42 J7-9, M4 J19-20, M5 J15-17
- **All lanes running** – variable speed limits, no hard shoulder, and emergency refuge areas every 2.5km as a minimum e.g. M25 J23-27, M25 J5-6/7



## Enforcing Speed Limits

- Variable speed limits (70, 60, 50, 40) are used to keep traffic flowing at peak times or for safety reasons – anything from a breakdown or crash to staff working at the roadside, or joining a motorway
- When there is an incident you'll first see the 60mph limit, and the signs will gradually slow your speed down until you reach the incident
- Mandatory speed limits are enforced using strategically positioned HADECS cameras able to detect and record speeding offences and initiate the prosecution process



## Red X Signs

- A Red X sign indicates that a lane is closed to traffic:
- You must stay out of that lane as there may be an incident or people working ahead or to provide access for maintenance or emergency services
- It's illegal to drive in a lane closed by a Red X sign
- If you're caught, you could receive a fixed penalty of up to £100 and three points



## The advice:

- Education is key – make sure you learn more about this new motorway phenomenon – it is critical to understand the do's and don't's: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/how-to-drive-on-a-smart-motorway>
- If it's not possible to exit your vehicle safely, there's no safe place to wait, or you feel your life is in danger, put your hazard warning lights on and stay in your vehicle with your seat belt on. If you have a mobile phone, dial '999' immediately.
- If you feel you can exit safely with any occupants, consider exiting your vehicle via the nearside (left hand) door, and wait behind the safety barrier, if there is one and it's safe to do so. Keep clear of your vehicle and moving traffic at all times (for example if your vehicle gets hit, you're out of the way).
- Switch on your hazard warning lights and any other lights such as rear fog lights or side lights, to increase your visibility especially if it's dark or foggy. Do not put out a warning triangle.
- Some incidents will be cleared very quickly so you may come across a lower speed limit but see no obvious reason for it
- 'Places of relative safety' include Emergency Refuge Areas, motorway service areas and short stretches of hard shoulder on exit slips
- If you have to stop, you'll see signs in the ERA telling you to contact the Regional Control Centre (using the SOS phone) when you stop and before you leave. Operators can monitor your vehicle using CCTV
- ERA's are only short lay-bys, not long enough to allow you to build up sufficient speed before re-joining the motorway, so before leaving you must contact the Regional Control Centre. They'll either dispatch a Highways England Traffic Officer and/or set signs and signals (red X) to assist your safe exit
- Be particularly conscious of safety if you breakdown at night with a full electrical failure and cannot make it to the emergency refuge as this would be a high risk situation

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