

Safe vehicle recovery options on smart motorways: Traffic Officer Service assistance

When attending a broken down or collision damaged vehicle within smart motorways and assistance from Highways England is required, call the Customer Contact Centre on: **0300 123 5000**

A) No Highways England assistance required

A1: If the hard shoulder **is not** being used as a live running lane then the roadside recovery operator (RRO) can exit the emergency refuge area (ERA) as normal and use the hard shoulder to accelerate to an appropriate speed before re-joining the carriageway.

A2: If the hard shoulder **is** being used as a live running lane and the RRO can exit the ERA safely without assistance:

1. The RRO should contact the regional control centre (RCC) using the emergency roadside telephone (ERT) located within the ERA.
2. Notify the RCC of their intention to leave the ERA.
3. Where the casualty vehicle has been repaired, the RRO should instruct the customer how to join the carriageway safely.

B) Incident access through red Xs

In all cases where permission is requested and granted to use the hard shoulder, a closed incident access lane (closed by a red X), or reverse access, to attend a casualty vehicle, the RRO must ensure that:

1. The RRO's name and their vehicle registration are provided.
2. All appropriate warning beacons and dipped headlights are displayed.
3. Progress is made at a speed appropriate for the prevailing conditions and, never exceeding 20 mph.
4. Extreme caution is exercised for the possibility of vehicles and pedestrians entering the hard shoulder or closed access lanes.
5. In all cases where requests are refused, the RRO must abide by the decision of the RCC and advise that there will be a delay in attending the casualty vehicle.
6. The RRO will obtain and keep a reference from the RCC which can be used as authorisation.
7. Under no circumstances whatsoever may the RRO drive on the hard shoulder or closed lane (closed by a red X) of a motorway (or dual carriageway) without first of all receiving permission.

C) Assisted entry and exit to an ERA

Where assistance is required to enter or exit an ERA:

1. Provide the direct contact number of the roadside recovery operator (RRO) for Highways England traffic officers.
2. The RCC will pass the following details to assist recovery if known:
 - a. The position of the vehicle occupying the ERA.
 - b. Whether there is enough space for the RRO to safely enter without traffic officer assistance.
 - c. Any signs and signals set.
3. The RRO will be asked to wait within the ERA.
4. The RCC will set variable message signs (lane divert or lane closure).
5. The RRO should check that traffic has cleared from the hard shoulder/lane 1 before attempting to exit the ERA.
6. Further assistance with a rolling road block or physical lane closure by an available traffic officer patrol may be required.
7. Signs and signals will remain in place until the RRO has safely left scene.

D) Reverse access

1. The reverse access option may be used where access to the incident scene with traffic flow is not possible.
2. Once a forward control point can be confirmed at the front of an incident by the Traffic Officer Service or police, then the RRO can access from the downstream on-slip and leave via the downstream off-slip.

Factors to consider

RCC resource

The RCC will consider authorising any request for assistance using the following factors:

1. Time of day and traffic conditions.
2. Is the RRO in congested traffic that is significantly impeding progress?
3. Are the occupants of the casualty vehicle vulnerable?
4. Has the Highways England scene commander requested early attendance of a RRO to assist incident resolution?

Traffic officer resource

1. Once the RRO has begun the repair or recovery process, the traffic officers should normally remain, offering protection until the RRO and the casualty vehicle leave the scene.
2. During the course of a vehicle repair or recovery, the traffic officer patrol may receive an instruction to deploy to an immediate response incident.
3. Where a traffic officer resource is unavailable to assist, the police or a secondary RRO should be considered.