

Code of Practice

Lighting and Marking for Abnormal Load Self escorting
vehicles incorporating Operating guidance

Code of Practice

Lighting and Marking for Abnormal Load Self escorting vehicles incorporating Operating guidance

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | | |
|----------|--|-----------|
| 1 | INTRODUCTION | 4 |
| 2 | VEHICLE REQUIREMENTS | 5 |
| | Size and type..... | 5 |
| | Colour | 5 |
| | Lighting | 5 |
| | Markings and signing – see figures 1 & 2 | 6 |
| | Side markings..... | 7 |
| | Rear markings | 7 |
| | Equipment and information to be carried in escort vehicle | 11 |
| | Road side safety equipment..... | 11 |
| | Emergency safety equipment..... | 11 |
| | Job specific reference information..... | 11 |
| | <i>Communications equipment</i> | 11 |
| 3 | ESCORT PERSON SPECIFICATION | 12 |
| | Escort person | 12 |
| | Main duties and responsibilities | 12 |
| | Essential skills and qualifications | 13 |
| | Desirable skills and qualifications..... | 13 |
| | Personal protective equipment..... | 13 |
| | Self certification | 14 |
| 4 | OPERATION | 14 |
| | Escorting criteria..... | 14 |
| | Operating guidance | 14 |
| 5 | BEFORE STARTING THE JOURNEY | 15 |
| | Escort vehicle check..... | 15 |
| | Pre-journey checks with abnormal load or abnormal vehicle personnel..... | 15 |
| 6 | ON THE ROAD..... | 16 |
| | Basic principles on vehicle manoeuvres | 17 |
| | Manoeuvre to close a lane to the left | 17 |
| | Manoeuvre to close a lane to the right | 17 |
| | Procedure for entering a motorway (principally for slow wide loads)..... | 17 |
| | Procedure for leaving a motorway..... | 18 |

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Basic principles – escorting from the front | 19 |
| In the event of a breakdown of the abnormal load vehicle..... | 19 |
| 7 PARKING UP | 20 |
| Vehicle parked “In line” | 20 |
| Vehicle parked in “Fend off” position..... | 21 |
| Vehicle parked in “Fend in” position..... | 21 |
| 8 JOB COMPLETED | 22 |
| APPENDIX 1: REFERENCES | 23 |
| APPENDIX 2: SELF ESCORTING DECLARATION | 24 |
| APPENDIX 3: ABNORMAL LOAD CLASSIFICATIONS AND NOTIFICATIONS..... | 25 |
| APPENDIX 4: ORGANISATIONAL ENDORSEMENT | 26 |

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This code of practice is voluntary and does not prescribe hard and fast rules, but provides practical guidelines, which may be departed from in appropriate circumstances. It is not intended to be a comprehensive statement of the law's requirements.
- 1.2 This code relates to the escorting of both abnormal loads and abnormal vehicles; throughout the document where reference is made to abnormal load it also refers to abnormal vehicle.
- 1.3 This said it is an authoritative statement of best practice, which has been agreed to by the organisations listed in Appendix 4. It not only points out many of the legal obligations which need to be met, but also contains information and explanations which are designed to ensure that those escorting abnormal loads¹ on the highways do so in a manner which maximises safety.
- 1.4 Self escorting offers greater flexibility for scheduling moves and therefore should enable loads to travel at off peak times when there is less traffic. This both reduces traffic disruption to other road users and improves journey times for the haulier.
- 1.5 Legislation² requires hauliers to notify the movement of most abnormal loads to the police before moving them by road. There is also a requirement to notify heavier loads and vehicles to highway and bridge authorities to ensure that bridge structures can accommodate these heavy loads. In Scotland, the term highway authority shall be deemed to be road authority. For the largest and heaviest abnormal loads, prior permission before moving is required from the Highways Agency Abnormal Loads team. If it is an abnormal vehicle, authorisation is required from the Vehicle Certification Agency.
- 1.6 Hauliers involved in the movement of abnormal loads have a responsibility to ensure that each movement is conducted in a controlled and safe manner. This shall equally apply if the load is being self escorted. Some larger and heavier loads are required to have an attendant, as defined in the relevant legislation³.
- 1.7 The term self escorting applies to either a haulier or a private company engaged by a haulier escorting an abnormal load. An escort person has no powers to stop or direct other road users or pedestrians and is there to warn them of the presence of an abnormal load.
- 1.8 This code of practice, which applies throughout England, Wales and Scotland, is intended to provide a nationwide standard that is recognised by both industry and the police authorities alike. A standard livery helps the general public and in particular

¹ Abnormal Indivisible Load as defined in Schedule 1, paragraph 2 by The Road Vehicles (Authorisation of Special Types) (General) Order 2003 (SI 1998) and Indivisible Load as defined by Regulation 3(2) of The Road Vehicles (Construction & Use) Regulations 1986 (SI 1078)-namely a load that cannot without undue expense or risk or damage be divided into two or more loads for the purpose of being carried on a road. STGO 2003 limits gross weight to 150 tonnes, length to 30m and width to 6.1m, above which a Special Order is required from the Highways Agency. A Highways Agency VR1 permit is required if width exceeds 5m.

² Schedule 12 of The Road Vehicles (Construction & Use Regulations) 1986 as amended (SI 1986/1078). Part 2 of The Road Vehicles (Authorisation of Special Types) (General) Order 2003 (SI 1998).

³ The Road Vehicles (Construction & Use Regulations) 1986 (SI 1078), Schedule 12 paragraph 2. Part 2 of The Road Vehicles (Authorisation of Special Types) (General) Order 2003 (SI 1998)

other road users to recognise these vehicles, thereby alerting them to the movement of an abnormal load so they can exercise greater caution as appropriate. However, to reduce the burden on industry, application of the code of practice is for new vehicles only.

1.9 This code of practice covers:

- the requirements for an escort vehicle including details of its appearance, markings, warning beacons, and equipment to be carried⁴
- the person specification for a self escort person with a description of the roles, responsibilities and duties
- general operating practices, including thresholds for self escorting, documentation to be carried and practices to be adopted whilst actively engaged in self escorting.

1.10 There is an additional code of practice which offer recommendations on the lighting and marking of abnormal load vehicles.

- Lighting and marking code of practice for SO, VR1, STGO and C&U loads.

2 Vehicle requirements

Vehicle specification

Size and type

2.1 An escort motor vehicle shall have a minimum of four wheels.

2.2 The escort vehicle must afford the driver good visibility. To facilitate this to the rear and side, the vehicle shall be fitted with exterior mirrors on both sides. In addition, it is preferable to have rear windows at the back and to the sides to aid driver visibility. Vehicles with open cargo space are not permitted.

2.3 The escort vehicle shall not form any part of the units carrying or hauling the abnormal load.

Colour

2.4 To be conspicuous to other road users and pedestrians the escort vehicle shall be of a uniform colour; white, yellow or orange is recommended. Silver is not considered to be a conspicuous colour; however it may be used together with appropriate retroreflective markings that make the vehicle conspicuous.

Lighting

2.5 In addition to the obligatory vehicle lighting requirements as specified in the Road Vehicles Lighting Regulations (RVLR) (1989) flashing warning beacons⁵ shall be fitted

⁴ References to equipment standards throughout the code of practice also cover Turkish standards and standards of EFTA states that are contracting parties to the EEA Agreement.

⁵ Beacon defined as visible around 360°

to the roof of the escort vehicle to alert other road users and pedestrians to the presence of an abnormal load or abnormal vehicle. This shall be a full roof width light bar fitted transversely with amber lights at each end and visible from the front and rear of the vehicle. No more than two banks of lights are permitted. These may be demountable. Warning beacons shall conform to both RVLR requirements and Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) Regulation 65 on Special Warning Lamps.

- 2.6 The amber warning beacons shall only be used whilst the vehicle is actively engaged in escorting an abnormal load.
- 2.7 Flash rates over 10Hz have been shown to increase glare and can also increase the risk of epileptic response. Alternating beacons (right and then left) at 1-3Hz increases the conspicuity of the vehicle without an increase in glare or increasing the risk of an epileptic response.
- 2.8 Beam cut-off has an effect on glare; it is recommended that the intensity at night with beam cut-off is 325-425cd and without beam cut-off it is 150-200cd. To minimise the safety risk from glare, beacons shall not be placed at the eye level of drivers.
- 2.9 To help alert other road users approaching the escort vehicle from the front, during the day the vehicle shall use continuously illuminated dipped beam headlamps when escorting the abnormal load.

Markings and signing – see figures 1 & 2

- 2.10 The vehicle shall be marked clearly to identify that it is an escort vehicle. This shall be done by marking “Escort Vehicle” or “Escort” in solid black first letter upper case, remaining lower case lettering, or lower case in forward script on the front of the vehicle. The marking shall be in plain sans serif font (e.g. Helvetica or Arial), and the lettering a minimum of 150mm high and a width to height ratio approaching one. Shadowing, italics and other lettering effects are not permitted. No other text or logos shall be located near to this lettering.
- 2.11 In addition, a fixed or removable sign may be fitted to the front and rear of the vehicle. The sign should only be displayed when the vehicle is actively engaged in escorting an abnormal load. The wording on this sign shall be ABNORMAL LOAD or WIDE LOAD as standard with SLOW LORRY or LONG LOAD as an option. The sign shall be mounted such that the sign face is perpendicular to the road surface and the text is horizontal. The sign shall be mounted either on the roof of the escort vehicle or preferably below the front grille, ensuring that the front number plate is still legible and does not affect the operation of the vehicle. The rear sign shall be mounted preferably below the rear number plate of the vehicle. If the sign is roof mounted, it must not obscure the roof mounted flashing amber warning beacon.
- 2.12 The sign should have black lettering on a yellow retroreflective background. The height of the lettering shall be a minimum height of 100mm. If the sign is mounted below the front grille of the escort vehicle, the retroreflective material used shall be to a minimum standard of Class RA1 or equivalent. The rear sign shall display the same legend as the front mounted sign and conform to the same standard of material. If the sign is mounted on the roof of the escort vehicle, the retroreflective material used shall be to a minimum standard of Class RA2 or equivalent.

2.13 Marker boards may be fitted to both ends of the sign. The width of the marker board and associated plates shall be the same as the width of the vehicle.



2.14 There shall be a roof sign displaying "Abnormal Load" in first letter upper case, remaining lower case lettering or lower case lettering using a sans serif font (e.g. Helvetica or Arial) and with a width to height ratio approaching one, which should be clearly visible from both the front and rear. This sign shall be lit when escorting and not be illuminated at any other time. Lighting regulations only permit red lighting to face the rear of the vehicle and any colour other than red to face forward. This should be taken into consideration in the design of any sign (suggested red internal lighting to rear and white to front). This sign may be demountable.

Side markings

2.15 To alert other road users approaching the vehicle from the side, a continuous 200mm wide horizontal strip of yellow retroreflective material shall be fitted along the length of the vehicle to at least the front wheel arch. At the rear of the vehicle a 300mm wide vertical chevron strip of retroreflective yellow and non retroreflective red shall be fitted. An alternative option shall be to block fill the side of the vehicle with fluorescent material.

2.16 The name of the vehicle operator and/or owner may be displayed upon the side of the vehicle forward of the extended chevron markings. The name and any logos shall not be retroreflective. No company livery shall be displayed on the front or rear of the vehicle. In addition, the following rules shall be followed:

- the number of the letters/characters shall be less than fifteen
- the height of the letters/characters is between 300mm and 1,000mm
- no long designs are used eg addresses and phone numbers.

Rear markings

2.17 To help alert other road users approaching the escort vehicle from the rear, high visibility markings shall be applied to the rear of the vehicle. These will be chevron markings of alternate red retroreflective material and yellow vinyl non retroreflective material (or equivalent), each with a strip width of 250mm on vans and larger vehicles, and 150mm for cars and car-derived vans.

2.18 The chevron markings shall be at 60° to the horizontal plane, with the chevrons pointing upwards and matching colours meeting at the vertical centre line of the vehicle. As much of the rear of the vehicle as possible should be marked in this way and any vehicle fittings should be cut around, eg light assemblies, number plates etc.

2.19 In addition to the chevron markings on the rear of the vehicle, outline markings consisting of 25mm-50mm wide red microprismatic retroreflective material shall be

fitted along the roof edge and to the outside door pillars in the case of the van and outside edge of the rear window in the case of a car.

- 2.20 When the rear doors of a self escort van are opened a 25mm–50mm wide red microprismatic retroreflective strip of material shall be fitted along the rear facing edge of the doors, along the open roof edge and along the floor sill. In the case of a self escort car the strip of material shall be fitted to the rear facing edge of the boot lid or tailgate.
- 2.21 If a piece of equipment is fitted or attached to the rear of the escort vehicle and obscures the chevron markings (eg a crash cushion in the upright position), the chevron markings shall be replicated on the equipment, so that the pattern continues to be visible.
- 2.22 To maintain high vehicle visibility from different angles, the red and yellow chevron markings shall be continued in an unbroken pattern onto the side of the vehicle body for a distance of 300mm measured from the rear most corner of the vehicle body. The markings shall be over the full height of the vehicle body.

Figure 1 – Illustration of an escort vehicle (not to scale)

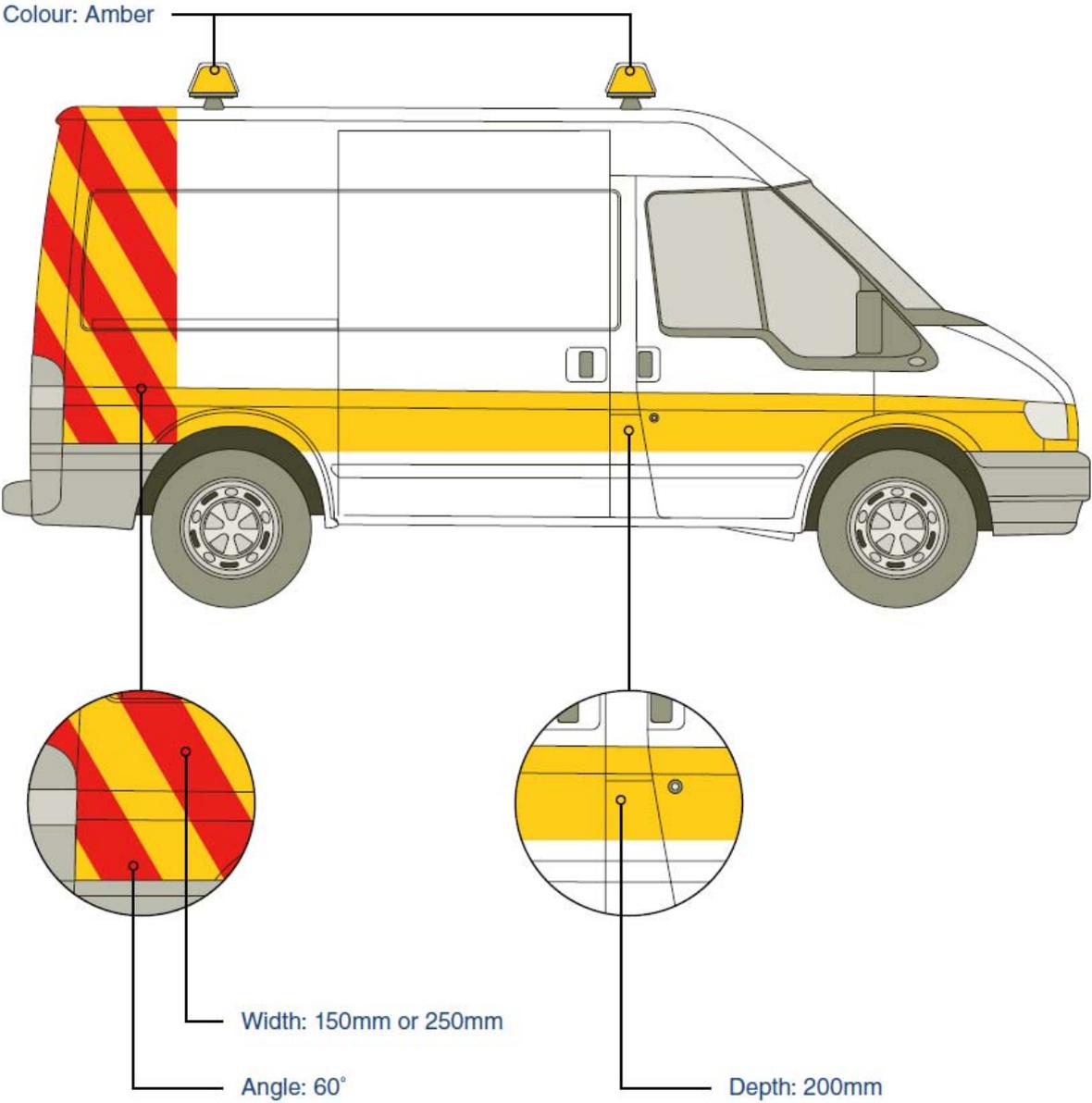
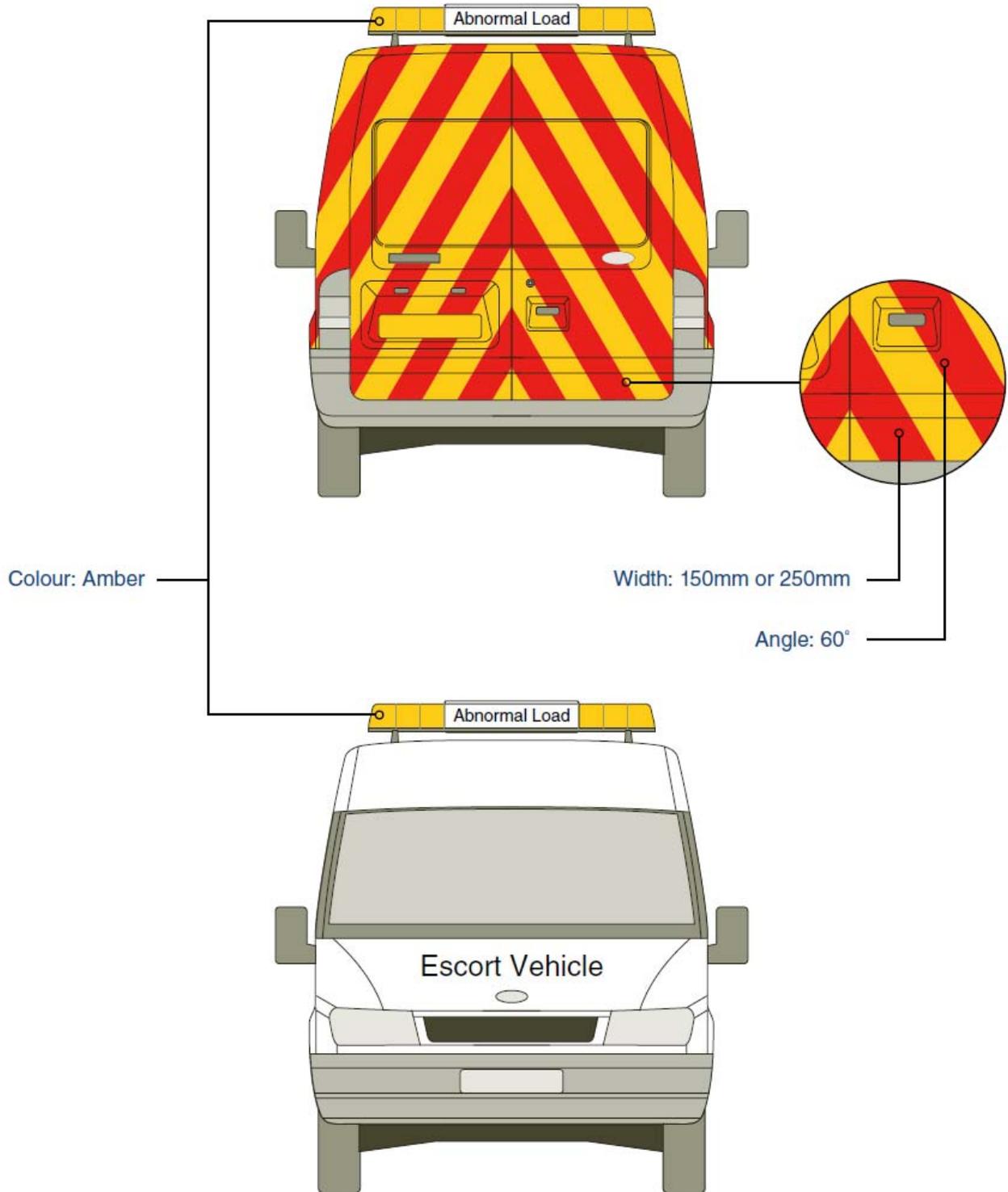


Figure 2 – Illustration of an escort vehicle (not to scale)



Equipment and information to be carried in escort vehicle

Road side safety equipment

2.23 To effectively manage road side safety during planned or unplanned stops, each escort vehicle shall be equipped with the following:

- A minimum of 12 traffic cones to BS 873:Part 8:1985⁶, and diagram 7101.1 in TSRGD 2002⁷, or an EC or EEA standard, which in practice provides standards equivalent to those standards contained in a British Standard.
- A minimum of 4 lighting units with a rate of flashing for each unit between 60 and 240 flashes per minute, compatible for installation upon traffic cones described above, to BS 3143:Part 2:1990 as amended⁸ or an EC or EEA standard, which in practice provides standards equivalent to those standards contained in a British Standard.

Emergency safety equipment

2.24 In the event of an incident during the journey, it is expected that the escort vehicle will be first to the scene. Therefore each vehicle shall be equipped with as a minimum, (and personnel trained in the use of):

- a powder or CO₂ fire extinguisher Kite marked and British Approval for Fire Equipment (BAFE) approved to BS EN3⁹ or an EC or EEA standard, which in practice provides standards equivalent to those standards contained in a British standard, a valid certificate¹⁰
- a '1 to 10' employee CE approved¹¹ first aid kit, maintained and the contents within their 'use-by-date'.

Job specific reference information

2.25 An escort vehicle shall carry the following information:

- a copy of the route to be followed, consents and restrictions as appropriate
- appropriate maps
- contact telephone numbers for police/highway authority control rooms
- up to date traffic and road work information if applicable.

Communications equipment

2.26 An escort vehicle shall have a:

- communications link to the abnormal load or abnormal vehicle

⁶ British Standard 873 – Specification for Traffic Cones and Cylinders.

⁷ Schedule 12 of TSRGD (Traffic Sign Regulations and General Directions 2002 (SI 3113).

⁸ British Standard 3143 – Specification for Road Danger Lamps.

⁹ British Standard EN3 – Portable Fire Extinguishers.

¹⁰ British Standard 5306 – Maintenance of Portable Fire Extinguishers and British Standard 6643 – Recharging Fire Extinguishers apply, or an EC or EEA equivalent.

¹¹ CE Approved means compliance with European Standards.

- communications link to the police/highway authority control rooms (and emergency services if required).

2.27 A direct radio voice link shall be installed in the escort vehicle to enable communications between the escort vehicles and the abnormal load¹². Either a short-range (under 3km) two-way radio system¹³ shall be used or a long-range (3–8km) radio system accompanied by the appropriate radio licence. The use of hand-held microphones for 2-way radio equipment when driving is not prohibited by the regulations¹⁴ dealing with the use of hand-held mobile phones or similar devices when driving. However there is still a risk of distraction when using a microphone (whether hand-held or hands-free). Consequently, drivers continue to risk prosecution under existing powers dealing with the requirement to have proper control of a vehicle.

2.28 Hand-held mobile phones or similar devices shall not be used by the escort person whilst driving. A mobile phone or other device is defined as 'hand-held' if it is, or must be, held at some point during the course of making or receiving a call (or text, or email, or other data – eg to/from a GPS navigation device). 'Driving' will include pausing at traffic lights or in temporary traffic jams. Hands free equipment is not prohibited. If installed, then the system should be to the standard of EC Recommendation L32/200¹⁵ (<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/JOHtml.do?uri=OJ:L:2007:032:SOM:EN:HTML>). Note however the warning about the risk of distraction and prosecution in the paragraph above, which applies equally to hands-free mobile phones.

3 Escort person specification

3.1 It is the responsibility of hauliers to satisfy themselves that their own escort personnel are sufficiently competent to undertake the task of escorting abnormal loads. Competent means that they are suitably trained and/or experienced for the role. Where a subcontractor is employed the subcontractor shall ensure that their staff are competent, through training and/or experience for the role.

Escort person

Main duties and responsibilities

3.2 The main duties and responsibilities of an escort person are:

- to escort the abnormal load along the approved transport route acting as a warning to other road users and pedestrians
- to ensure that any special instructions/restrictions, for example cautions applying to bridges, tunnels or level crossings, either for the escort vehicle or the vehicle carrying the abnormal load, are adhered to

¹² This type of equipment can be used whilst driving.

¹³ Short range radio systems are readily available and can be used without the need for a registered frequency licence.

¹⁴ The Road Vehicles (Construction and Use) (Amendment)(No 4) Regulations 2003 SI 2695.

¹⁵ EC Recommendation L32/200 on safe and efficient in-vehicle information and communication systems .

- to act as a point of contact and to be the communications interface between the abnormal load convoy and police/highway authority control rooms, bridge authorities and emergency services if required
- to alert the emergency services as appropriate in the event of an incident involving the abnormal load. (If suitably trained, use the first aid kit and fire extinguisher as appropriate.)
- to place traffic cones and warning beacons around the abnormal load when it is stationary for a period of time in order to warn other road users
- to ensure that the escort vehicle is 'fit for purpose' and conforms to this code of practice.

Essential skills and qualifications

3.3 Essential skills and qualifications required are:

- a minimum age of 21 years old
- a full standard driving licence held
- to be able to speak and read the English language¹⁶
- to be competent through training and/or experience in the movement and transportation of abnormal loads or abnormal vehicles.

Desirable skills and qualifications

3.4 Desirable skills and qualifications are:

- basic first aid training and qualification¹⁷
- basic use of a fire extinguisher training¹⁸.

Personal protective equipment

3.5 Each escort person actively involved in escorting an abnormal load shall be equipped with a long sleeve high visibility fluorescent yellow jacket conforming to BS EN 471¹⁹ or an EC or EEA standard, which in practice provides standards equivalent to those standards contained in a British standard. This shall be worn at all times when the escort person is outside of the escort vehicle²⁰.

¹⁶ Alternatively, the escort person may be accompanied by a colleague, with whom they can communicate fully, who can speak and read English on their behalf.

¹⁷ For example – St John's Ambulance 1 day certified course – 'Lifesaver First Aid', or equivalent.

¹⁸ For example – Typical Fire Service ½ day Basic Fire Awareness and Hands on Training Course, or equivalent.

¹⁹ British Standard BS EN 471 – Specification for High Visibility Warning Clothing.

²⁰ Those undertaking self escorting operations should also consider the use and/or availability of other personal protective equipment considered as necessary.

Self certification

- 3.6 The haulier or subcontractor shall ensure that their self escort vehicles comply with this code of practice and that their personnel have sufficient training and/or experience to carry out self escorting duties competently and safely in a manner which accords with the requirements of Road Traffic and Health and Safety legislation²¹.
- 3.7 When notifying the movement of an abnormal load to the police, they may ask for a self-certificate or other evidence to show that the vehicles and personnel to be used comply with this code of practice. A self escorting declaration form is available at Appendix 2.

4 Operation

- 4.1 This section covers the general requirements and operating practices that shall be conformed to when actively engaged in self escorting an abnormal load. It also gives general guidance on the minimum threshold above which self escorting is required.
- 4.2 Some abnormal loads need an attendant, as defined in the relevant legislation²². An escort person can also carry out this role, provided they are not travelling in the vehicle carrying the abnormal load, and provided they fully meet the legislative requirements²³. Any person driving a vehicle for the purpose of assisting the propulsion of another vehicle cannot be the attendant.
- 4.3 The police abnormal loads officer and haulier shall agree on a case-by-case basis the minimum number of escort vehicles and escort personnel required for the movement.

Escorting criteria

Operating guidance

- 4.4 As general guidance the following dimensions may be applied to decide if the movement of an abnormal load requires an escort. Generally an escort vehicle is required if:

| Measurement | For Motorways | For all other roads |
|------------------------------|---------------|---------------------|
| Load / vehicle width exceeds | 4.6m | 4.1m |
| Overall vehicle length | - | 30.5m |

²¹ The Health & Safety at Work etc Act 1974, Chapter 37, The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 (SI 3242) and 'Driving at Work – Managing Work-Related Road Safety' which are Department for Transport (DfT) and Health & Safety Executive (HSE) guidelines available from the HSE website – www.hse.gov.uk

²² The Road Vehicles (Construction & Use Regulations) 1986 (SI 1078), Schedule 12 paragraph 2. Part 2 of The Road Vehicles (Authorisation of Special Types) (General) Order 2003 (SI 1998)

²³ Schedule 6 of The Road Vehicles (Authorisation of Special Types) (General) Order 2003 (SI 1998).

| | | |
|------------------------------|------------|------------|
| exceeds | | |
| Vehicle gross weight exceeds | 130 tonnes | 100 tonnes |

- 4.5 The above measures are for guidance and may differ between individual police forces who may wish to vary these requirements. The final decision rests with the police, along with timing of the move on specific stretches of road.
- 4.6 Depending on the situation or location, a police escort may be requested for all or part of the route. These requests will be made by the local police abnormal load officer when an application to move an abnormal load is made.
- 4.7 Upon notification police authorities will respond to the haulier when an escort is required and whether a police escort is necessary.
- 4.8 A combination of self escort and police escort vehicles may be used, to be agreed by both parties.
- 4.9 A haulier can choose to self escort an abnormal load below these guidelines.
- 4.10 The vehicle carrying the abnormal load shall not divert from the agreed route, unless directed to do so by police and only then when the appropriate highway and/or bridge authorities' approval has been obtained.
- 4.11 Drivers of the escort vehicle shall not contravene road traffic legislation.
- 4.12 Where self escort vehicles are changed along the route the appropriate paperwork and information shall be handed over.

5 Before starting the journey

- 5.1 It is important that the designated escort driver knows exactly what is expected of them, either from their own company, or from their client before undertaking the job.

Escort vehicle check

- 5.2 In addition to familiarising themselves with the load and the proposed route, the escort driver should ensure that the escort vehicle(s) are fit for purpose.

Pre-journey checks with abnormal load or abnormal vehicle personnel

- 5.3 It is vital that the escort driver and the driver of the abnormal load liaise prior to the journey, either on the day or in advance. Before meeting up with the vehicle(s) to be escorted, familiarisation with the local road layout and of how to exit the departure point will be useful.
- 5.4 The notified route to be taken should be communicated to the escort driver (ideally in advance). Any disagreement or uncertainty must be resolved prior to departure. The route can only be the one notified to the relevant authorities and may have specific

instructions associated with it eg regarding timings or negotiation of particular structures. Only the notified authorities can agree any changes to the route.

- 5.5 A route plan should be agreed, including a timetable for the journey and detailing changeover or lay-up points and how specific route cautions will be complied with. The start time should give due regard to peak-traffic levels and any local requirements.
- 5.6 If the police are assisting with the escort for all or part of the journey, follow any police instructions given.
- 5.7 If the escort driver is aware of any obvious problem(s) with the load or vehicle, then they should be made known to the driver of the load.
- 5.8 The escort driver shall contact each relevant police force traffic control room 30 minutes prior to arrival in that police area or before departing from a location within that police area, quoting any reference or authorisation numbers that apply. Any police guidance relating to traffic or weather conditions should be followed. On arrival at a destination or when leaving a police force area the relevant traffic control room shall again be notified.
- 5.9 The escort driver should also check whether there are requests to inform journey details²⁴ to:
 - **National Traffic Control Centre (Tel: 0121 245 4688 - 24hrs)** if using motorways and trunk roads in England
 - **Traffic Wales (Tel: 0845 602 6020 - 24hrs)** if travelling on Welsh trunk roads
 - **Traffic Scotland (Tel: 0141 287 9283 – 24hrs)** if using motorways and trunk roads in Scotland.

6 On the road

- 6.1 The escort vehicle's function is to warn other road users, including pedestrians of the presence of an abnormal load, as well as to maintain ongoing contact with the driver of the abnormal load. Whenever escort duties are being performed the communications link between the escort vehicle and the load should not be broken.
- 6.2 On motorways and dual carriageways, an escort vehicle should be positioned to the rear of the abnormal load, at a distance to give adequate warning to other road users of the load.
- 6.3 On two-way roads and at traffic islands or intersections, an escort vehicle shall be positioned to the front of the abnormal load to give adequate warning to other road users of the load.

²⁴ In particular, this may apply for Special Order loads (loads in excess of 6.1m wide, 30m long (rigid), 150,000kgs gross weight and/or with one or more axles exceeding 16,500kg) and VR1 loads (loads in excess of 5m wide). There may also be a requirement to update such organisations whilst en route.

Basic principles on vehicle manoeuvres

6.4 The following are a number of general statements of best practice, but each load and route will dictate the best way to escort.

Manoeuvre to close a lane to the left

6.5 A motorist may attempt to undertake the convoy, particularly near to entrance/exit slip roads; if this happens, the following actions should be taken:

- the driver of the load should be warned that a vehicle is undertaking to the left
- if an opportunity for undertaking presents itself to other traffic, the escort driver should safely move into the left adjacent lane²⁵
- the driver of the load should be told that the left lane has been secured
- the distance between the escort vehicle and the load should be shortened
- the normal escorting position and distance should be resumed when appropriate.

Manoeuvre to close a lane to the right

6.6 The driver of the load may inform the escort driver that they wish to move out eg because of an obstruction on the hard shoulder; to do this safely the following actions should be taken:

- the escort driver should mirror, signal, manoeuvre into the right adjacent lane when there is sufficient space and with regard to the speed of other traffic
- the escort driver should inform the driver of the load that the right lane is secured
- the distance between the escort vehicle and the load should be shortened
- once clear of the obstruction, the escort driver should indicate left and resume normal escort position
- the driver of the load should be told it is safe to move back into the left lane.

Procedure for entering a motorway (principally for slow wide loads)

6.7 To join a motorway safely the following actions should be taken:

- the escort vehicle should enter the motorway in front of the load
- from the slip road, the escort driver should ensure that the hard shoulder is clear – special care should be taken when entering from short slip roads
- the escort vehicle should be positioned in the right hand lane, with the load in left hand lane

²⁵ Unless the left adjacent lane is the hard shoulder.

- the escort vehicle should enter lane 1 before the load enters the motorway, ensuring that no vehicles can get between the escort vehicle and the load
- the driver of the load should be advised that lane 1 is secured
- if, due to the width of the load, lane 2 also needs to be secured, the manoeuvre to close the right lane should be followed
- once the load is on the motorway the normal escort position should be resumed. If it is not possible to carry out this action safely an additional escort vehicle should be employed.

Procedure for leaving a motorway

6.8 To leave a motorway safely the escort vehicle should prepare for the convoy to leave at the next junction by taking the following actions:

- the escort driver should indicate left in good time, but not move left straight away
- the distance between the escort vehicle and the load should be shortened
- the driver of the load should be advised to enter the slip-road, and warned if vehicles are attempting to undertake
- once the load begins to progress up the slip-road, the indicator should be cancelled and the distance between the escort vehicle and the abnormal load increased
- if transferring to a single-carriageway road, traffic island or road junction, the escort vehicle should be prepared to move to the front prior to entering the slip road if necessary.

Basic principles – escorting from the rear

6.9 The following are a number of general statements of best practice, but each load and route will dictate the best way to escort.

- Maintain communication with driver of the load, and agree how manoeuvres will be communicated eg what will be said when the driver of the load wishes the escort driver to secure a second lane.
- Contact police/highway control rooms 30 minutes in advance, as necessary, as route progresses.
- When on dual carriageways and motorways, position the vehicle at a suitable distance behind the load (approximately 50-75m).
- This distance could be varied depending on road, traffic and/or weather conditions.
- The positioning of the escort vehicle on the road should be guided by the width of the load:
 - If the load only takes lane 1, position the escort vehicle in lane 1 behind, ensuring as far as possible that the escort vehicle does not obscure beacons on the load.

- If the load encroaches into lane 2, it may be appropriate to position the escort vehicle in lane 2, so the escort vehicle protects the full width of the load at all times.
- Give other motorists the maximum warning of any manoeuvre, which should always be gradual and smooth.
- When escorting, considerable traffic build-up can occur behind the load. Opportunities to pull the load over safely and let the traffic pass should be taken at suitable intervals.

Basic principles – escorting from the front

6.10 The following are a number of general statements of best practice, but each load and route will dictate the best way to escort.

- Escort drivers must always position their vehicle at the front of the load at the start of an escort, on single carriageway 2-way roads and at traffic islands or intersections. The primary purpose when leading the load is to warn other road users and pedestrians of the presence and potential danger of the oncoming abnormal load. It is also to alert the driver of the load to potential hazards both on the road and overhead.
- The escort vehicle should be at an appropriate distance ahead of the load to give oncoming traffic the maximum amount of warning. If possible, visual contact should be maintained with the load but this will not be the case when the escort vehicle has negotiated one or a number of bends ahead of the load.
- Contact police/highway control rooms 30 minutes in advance, as necessary, as route progresses.
- The driver of the vehicle being escorted should be alerted to parked vehicles, pedestrians, obstructions and vehicles that may have pulled out behind the escort vehicle.
- The escort vehicle should be positioned as far to the right as possible without straddling the centre line, with dipped headlights on. Other vehicles should be signalled to slow down or move over to their nearside as necessary. Any hand actions²⁶ need to be slow and deliberate and reflective jackets should be worn to improve visibility.
- When escorting, considerable traffic build-up can occur behind the load. Opportunities to pull the load over safely and let the traffic pass should be taken at suitable intervals.

In the event of a breakdown of the abnormal load vehicle

6.11 The nature of the breakdown should be quickly established from the driver of the load, and whether they are able to continue, at least to a suitable stopping area, without deviating from the agreed route. If unable, any deviation from the route **must** be

²⁶ Use the signals set out in the Highway Code

cleared with the relevant authorities (this includes, for example, passing over structures to get to motorway service areas).

- 6.12 The escort vehicle should be placed at an appropriate distance and in the most advantageous position to protect the load and its personnel, using the lights and markings to give the maximum warning to other traffic. There is no definitive guide to an escort vehicle's orientation in such circumstances; the nature and position of the breakdown will dictate. However, the escort vehicle should be left with its front wheels steered in-line, and in the case of an automatic gearbox, with the gear selector in park. The handbrake must also be set.
- 6.13 The police and/or highway control room should be contacted without delay, especially if the broken down vehicle is causing an obstruction. All instructions given should be followed.
- 6.14 If the escort vehicle breaks down, the driver of the abnormal load should be informed immediately. Both the escort vehicle and the abnormal load should be parked in, or moved to, a safe place. The escort driver should make arrangements for repairs or a replacement as soon as possible, and the police informed if necessary.
- 6.15 Cones should only be placed to warn others of an obstruction if the drivers of the load and the escort agree that it is safe to do so, having taken account of the circumstances of the breakdown and the risks posed to themselves and other road users.

7 Parking up

- 7.1 There is no definitive guide to the recommended orientation of an escort vehicle when the abnormal load is stationary in a live traffic situation. The section describes the three main choices and the advantages and disadvantages of each. The escort driver should decide which is most appropriate for the circumstances.

Vehicle parked "In line"

- 7.2 The escort vehicle is positioned behind the abnormal load facing forwards.

The advantages are:

- rear facing amber bar lights and red brake lights are most visible
- rear vehicle markings most visible
- driver of vehicle is not exposed to direct impact on exiting vehicle
- it can prevent obstructing the live carriageway if the hard shoulder or lay-by is particularly narrow.

The disadvantages are:

- may appear to approaching drivers that that the vehicle is moving
- does not fill the lane, therefore offering only a limited line of defence

- if the vehicle is struck it will travel forward and may strike the load.

Vehicle parked in “Fend off” position

7.3 The escort vehicle is positioned behind the abnormal load facing forwards and to the right.

The advantages are:

- fills the lane and therefore provides a line of defence
- approaching drivers tend to want to pass by driving around the front
- provides a forewarning that the vehicle is stationary
- visually the vehicle tends to get larger as approaching vehicles draw nearer
- when parked on a motorway hard shoulder, the vehicle tends to encourage people away from it, since it appears as though it could be emerging from the hard shoulder and is more likely to arouse caution from an approaching motorist
- provides the escort driver with a better view of approaching traffic when looking to exit the vehicle
- provides a better view of approaching traffic over the escort vehicle’s bonnet, and enables the escort driver to be better aware of approaching traffic.

The disadvantages are:

- rear lights aimed towards the hard shoulder
- when parked on a hard shoulder approaching motorists may be inclined to react by slowing or changing lanes having wrongly assumed that the escort vehicle is emerging from the hard shoulder
- escort driver is exposed to a direct impact from an errant vehicle
- when on the hard shoulder, if struck, the vehicle is more likely to be projected into live lanes; an errant vehicle having struck the escort vehicle may then breach the zone between escort vehicle and load.

Vehicle parked in “Fend in” position

7.4 The escort vehicle is positioned behind the abnormal load facing forwards and to the left.

The advantages are:

- fills the lane and therefore provides a line of defence
- provides a forewarning that the vehicle is stationary
- driver not exposed to direct impact on exiting vehicle
- when parked on the hard shoulder, if struck, it will minimise the likelihood of the vehicle being projected into the live carriageway.

The disadvantages are:

- rear lights are aimed towards the central reservation
- when “fend in” is used whilst parked on the hard shoulder, and a nearside barrier or wall is present, if the vehicle is struck it is more likely to collide with the barrier and then continue to travel along the hard shoulder alongside the barrier and towards the load
- visually the vehicle tends to get smaller as approaching vehicles draw nearer
- with the vehicle in the “fend in” position it tends to obstruct the escort driver’s view of approaching traffic when returning to the vehicle
- approaching drivers tend to want to pass by driving around the front.

8 Job completed

- 8.1 If the layout of the destination is unfamiliar to the escort driver, or is served by minor or locally busy roads, it is recommended that the load is parked at a suitable stopping point before a survey is undertaken of approach roads. Any specific access requirements should be agreed with site managers.
- 8.2 On the approach to the destination, the escort vehicle should be positioned in front of the load to warn any vehicle or person leaving the site of the presence of the load.

Appendix 1: References

| Reference | Organisation |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| Code of Practice Self escorting of Abnormal Loads and Abnormal Vehicles (PR210/07) | Highways Agency (HA) |
| Operating Guidance for Abnormal Load Escorting (PR210/07) | HA |
| Escort Method Statement | Abnormal Load Escort Network |
| Escort Manual | Heavy Transport Association |
| Highway Code | Department for Transport |
| Highways Agency Traffic Officer Manual | HA |

Appendix 2: Self escorting declaration

Self escorting declaration

I, the undersigned, certify that:

- the following vehicle(s) meet the vehicle specification contained within the Lighting and Marking code of practice for Abnormal Load self escorting vehicles
- the driver(s) of the vehicle(s) meet the essential criteria and operating guidance contained within the aforementioned code of practice .

| Registration number | Vehicle type |
|----------------------------|---------------------|
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |

| Signature | Name (block capitals) | Status in company | Name of company |
|------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|
| | | | |

Appendix 3: Abnormal load classifications and notifications

| Gross vehicle weight | Axle weight | Width ≤2.9m Length ≤18.65m | W>2.9m L>18.65m | W>3m L>18.75m Vehicle combination L>25.9m | W>5m, VR1 | W>6.1m L>30m, SO |
|--|-------------------|--|-------------------------------|--|---|---|
| ≤18,000kgs (2-axle) ≤26,000kgs (3-axle) ≤32,000kgs (4-axle rigid) ≤36,000kgs (2+2 axle artic) ≤40,000kgs (5-axle) ≤44,000kgs (others) | C&U AWR limits | N/A | Police: 2 days | Police: 2 days | HA AIL team: 2 weeks Police: 2 days | HA AIL team: 10 weeks Police: 5 days RBA: 5 days |
| Exceeding above limits or ≤ 50,000kgs, STGO Cat 1 | AWR limits | Road and Bridge Authorities (RBA): 2 days | RBA: 2 days | HA AIL team: 2 weeks Police: 2 days RBA: 2 days | | |
| >50,000kgs, STGO Cat 2 | ≤12,000kgs | | | HA AIL team: 2weeks Police: 2days RBA: 5days | | |
| >80,000kgs, STGO Cat 3 | ≤16,500kgs | Police: 2 days RBA: 5 days | Police: 2 days RBA: 5 days | | | |
| >150,000kgs, Special Order (SO) | >16,500kgs | HA AIL team: 10 weeks Police: 5 days RBA: 5 days | | | | |

Abnormal indivisible load categories and notifications

| | |
|---|--|
| C&U <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Loads in excess of 2.9m wide or 18.65m long: 2 clear days notice to Police | STGO <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Loads greater than 50,000kgs or C&U limits and less than 80,000kgs: 2 clear days notice and indemnity to RBA Loads over 80,000kgs: 2 clear days notice to Police and 5 clear days RBA notification with indemnity |
| STGO VR1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Application to HA 2 weeks prior to proposed date of movement Loads greater than 44,000kgs or C&U limits and less than 80,000kgs: 2 clear days notice to Police and RBA notification with indemnity Loads over 80,000kgs: 2 clear days notice to Police and 5 clear days RBA notification with indemnity | Special Order (SO) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Application to HA 10 weeks prior to move 5 clear days notice to Police and RBA notification with indemnity |

Key to classifications

Note: There are other factors, eg rigid length and overhangs that also affect the notification requirements. There are also Authorised Weight Regulations that may apply.

Appendix 4: Organisational endorsement

This document is endorsed by the following organisations:

Association of Chief Police Officers



Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland



Construction Plant-hire Association



Department for Transport



Freight Transport Association



Heavy Transport Association



Road Haulage Association



If you need help using this or any other Highways Agency information please call **0300 123 5000** and we will assist you.

© Crown copyright (2012).

You may re-use this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence: visit <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/> write to the **Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU**, or email psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This document is also available on our website at www.highways.gov.uk

If you have any enquiries about this publication email ha_info@highways.gsi.gov.uk or call **0300 123 5000**. Please quote the Highways Agency publications code **PR22/12**.

Highways Agency media services Birmingham. Job number M1200128

Directgov

Public services all in one place
www.direct.gov.uk