



If you need help using this or any other Highways Agency information, please call **08457 50 40 30*** and we will assist you.

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Helping you plan your journey

Graham Dalton, Chief Executive



We all want easy, safe journeys that get us from A to B in a reasonable amount of time. Here at the Highways Agency, we know that investing just a little time in planning your journey can help you achieve this.

So what do we mean by planning a journey? When most people think about journey planning they think about maps and plotting their route, that's part of it and we have provided free road maps in this booklet, but it's more than just that. It's about being informed about traffic conditions before and during your journey, it can mean choosing to travel at a different time to avoid congestion or a planned event – or even not travelling by road at all.

Getting relevant information to you when you need it is our objective and we have established a range of traffic information services that you can use absolutely free. Every year we have millions of visits to our websites from road users planning their journeys or wanting to know more about the work of the Highways Agency. This is

especially true when we have a significant weather event when we can receive a month's visitors in just one day. We display vital information about our network including congestion, incidents, weather and give you the ability to view any of our 1,000 traffic cameras live online. We also have our own 24-hour digital radio station available online or through DAB and, on top of this, you probably receive our live traffic information via local and national media broadcasters throughout England.

You'll find details of all these services and more in this booklet together with the free road maps. I hope it gives you some new ideas about ways in which you can plan your journeys and make best use of our roads and the public transport network.

We'd welcome your feedback about this booklet or any other aspect of our services. Please contact our information line on **08457 50 40 30*** and let us know what you think.

Who we are and what we do



The Highways Agency is an Executive Agency of the Department for Transport. We are responsible for operating, maintaining and improving England's motorway and major 'A' road network.

This network is the backbone of the country and our roads carry one third of all traffic and two thirds of all goods traffic. The strategic road network itself is over 7,050 km long and is valued at £85 billion. It provides a vital service to commerce and industry and has a major impact on the lives of individuals and communities.

How we can help you plan your journey



Before you travel

Check your route:

- The road atlas from page 27 onwards
- The Transport Direct online journey planner at: **www.transportdirect.info**

Check the latest traffic conditions:

- Live updates at: **www.highways.gov.uk/traffic**
- Traffic England automated telephone line on: **08700 660 115***
- Traffic Radio on DAB digital radio and at: **www.trafficradio.org.uk**
- TV text services such as Ceefax, BBCi and Teletext.

We have a number of leaflets available to inform you about planned roadworks in your region. You can obtain them by calling our information line on: **08457 50 40 30***.

Check the weather forecast:

- Severe weather events that are likely to disrupt roads and motorways will be highlighted on the home page of our website at: **www.highways.gov.uk**
- You can also use the Met Office website at: **www.metoffice.gov.uk** for weather forecasts.

And remember

- Plan your journey to allow for a 15 minute break every two hours
- Make sure your vehicle is roadworthy and always carry a spare tyre in good condition
- Take emergency items for very hot or very cold weather
- Check you have enough fuel before you set off
- Don't start a long trip if you are already tired.

How we can help you with your journey

As you travel



Check for changing travel conditions:

- Variable message signs (more information on page 12)
- Traffic Radio on DAB digital radio
- Local radio bulletins
- Traffic England automated telephone line on: **08700 660 115***
- Highways Agency mobile website at: **www.highways.gov.uk/mobile**
- Our information points located at some motorway service areas.

Report any problems you see

- Highways Agency Information Line on: **08457 50 40 30***.

And remember

- **Switch off before you drive off - remember even using a hands-free phone will distract you from driving**
- Don't travel too close to the vehicle in front
- Take regular breaks
- The hard shoulder is a dangerous place. It is illegal to use it except in an emergency. Never use it to answer the phone, go to the toilet or check a map.

If you do have an emergency follow the top personal safety tips on page 6.

* Calls from landlines to 08457 and 08700 numbers can cost up to 8p per minute but are free from some landline providers; mobiles usually cost more. Please check costs with your service provider.

What to do if you break down



Motorway hard shoulders are dangerous places. It is illegal to stop on a hard shoulder except in an emergency. You should never stop there to read a map, go to the toilet or use a mobile phone – always drive to the next services or exit.

You should plan your journey in advance, making sure you have enough fuel before joining the motorway. If an emergency forces you to stop, then follow the Highways Agency's top personal safety tips to stay safe:

- Pull onto the hard shoulder and park as far left as possible, near an emergency roadside telephone if you can. Turn on your vehicle's hazard warning lights
- Leave your vehicle immediately via the left hand door. Make sure your passengers do the same. You should leave any animals in the vehicle, or keep them under proper control on the verge
- Contact the Highways Agency via the emergency roadside telephone. On the motorways, you will see them spaced at one mile intervals, with roadside markers



THE HARD SHOULDER EMERGENCY USE ONLY
STOP ON A HARD SHOULDER AND YOU ARE MORE LIKELY TO BE INVOLVED IN A SERIOUS ACCIDENT

What to do if you break down



displaying an arrow pointing you in the direction to the nearest phone. Always use these phones in preference to a mobile, as your location will be pinpointed on the operator's screen so it will be easier to find you

- To assist you when calling for help, there are large blue signs at the side of many motorways which allow you to tell the emergency services or Highways Agency where you are (more information on page 17)

- Stay well away from the carriageway and hard shoulder while waiting for help to arrive. You should never attempt even the simplest of repairs
- If you feel at risk from another person, return to your vehicle via the left hand door, fasten your seatbelt and lock all the doors. Leave your vehicle again as soon as you feel the risk has passed.

Before you rejoin the carriageway after a breakdown, build up speed on the hard shoulder and watch for a safe gap in the traffic.



If you have a disability which prevents you from following the above advice, the Highway Code advises that you should stay in the vehicle, switch on your hazard warning lights and display a 'help' pennant. If you have a mobile phone you should dial 999, advising the emergency services of your location, and making them aware that you have a disability.

Our website



Key Points

- Online live traffic information
- Updates on your mobile
- Customised information

At: **www.highways.gov.uk** you can find information about our work to provide safe roads, reliable journeys and informed travellers. There are details of how we keep the traffic moving and information on our work on safety, the environment and the latest road schemes.

You can get live traffic information at: **www.highways.gov.uk/traffic** in a number of ways – all to help you plan your journey. There is an easy-to-use map-based layout or you can view information by individual motorway. Our online information is also available

at: **www.highways.gov.uk/mobile** on compatible mobile devices presented in a simple text-based format to speed up download times.

See our roads and motorways online

You can get a picture of the traffic conditions ahead by checking our website before you leave – helping you to plan your journey more effectively. Or get updates from your laptop, mobile device or internet café when you stop for a break.





Our website shows:

- Average speeds from our sensors in the road surface
- What our variable message signs are displaying
- Live incidents
- Future events and roadworks
- Weather conditions
- Live images from our CCTV cameras.

Customised information

You can now download your own live traffic ticker, bringing the latest traffic information to your desktop. You can filter this information so that you only receive traffic data specific to your region or chosen motorway. Alternatively, you can subscribe for traffic information bulletins of interest to you via email or RSS feeds. We can even provide traffic feeds for your own website.



Future developments: We are working on ways of getting traffic information to you in the most useful format. The next generation Highways Agency Information Points will provide live traffic information on large screens for you to use when you are out and about.

Automated telephone service



Key Points

- Phone for the latest traffic information
- By road or region
- Switch off before you drive off

You can access our live spoken information for England's motorways and major 'A' roads from any phone.

Call to get the latest information before you set off or when you stop for a break – **never use a mobile phone while driving.**

The service has both keypad and voice activated commands, so you can tell us the road or region you are interested in and it will provide you with the latest information.

Features:

- Find out about future events by using a simple menu of options
- Choose to receive the information by road, region, or date and time. This will help you plan a different route to avoid these areas.

For real-time traffic information telephone:

08700 660 115*



Highways Agency Information Line

Key Points

- Our contact centre available 24/7/365
- Call: **08457 50 40 30***
- email: **ha_info@highways.gsi.gov.uk**



Whether it's about traffic conditions, signs, major incidents, traffic officers, environmental issues, debris on the road or even recruitment, you can speak to someone at our contact centre 24 hours a day. We also have an email address if that's how you'd prefer to get in touch.

Our advisors have access to all of our live traffic data so can give you updates about all major incidents on our network, while the latest on-screen resources help them to answer your questions quickly and efficiently.

Contact us if you see anything that you think we should know about. This could include reporting debris on the road or simply giving us feedback on the service we provide to you.

- **08457 50 40 30***
- **ha_info@highways.gsi.gov.uk**



Variable message signs



Key Points

- Information when you are driving
- Journey times
- Safety messages

We have more than 2,000 large electronic signs around our network to inform you of traffic conditions ahead. They give important information about:

- Accidents and emergencies
- Congestion and recommended alternative routes
- Roadworks
- Current and future events that may cause delays.

They also carry road safety messages, such

as warning you to slow down or reminding you not to use a mobile phone while driving.

The setting of messages is managed in two ways. Most signs are set automatically to warn about queues ahead or to supply journey time information. All other messages are set by operators at our control centres. The messages are grouped into two areas; safety and information.

- Journey time messages are a type of information sign. The journey time is



Variable message signs



calculated by tracking real movements on the motorway network. This means that when a sign says, for example, "to J4A (for M42) 18 mins" it is reporting that vehicles have completed that journey in the time displayed. If the journey is taking much longer than expected the sign will automatically warn of delays

- Queue warnings are safety signs set by sensors in the road that detect slow moving traffic. These signs are set several miles back to slow down approaching traffic for safety reasons and to reduce

the chance of further congestion.

Sometimes, by the time you reach the site of the original incident, the traffic flow may have returned to normal, meaning you won't see either a queue or the cause of the incident

- Problems ahead? Around 500 of the signs are located at key decision points on the network, where information about a problem some distance away will allow you to change your route if necessary.



Traffic Radio and automatic travel bulletins



Key Points

- Available on DAB digital radio
- Online at: www.trafficradio.org.uk
- Traffic announcements

Tune in for news of the very latest traffic conditions. Our digital radio station Traffic Radio broadcasts continuous round-the-clock information, from the Highways Agency National Traffic Control Centre, telling you about the national network and regional traffic information.

You can find the service on DAB digital radios by pressing the scan button and then scrolling to find Traffic Radio. You can check it out before you leave – it's also available on the internet at: www.trafficradio.org.uk and on compatible mobile handsets.

Our Highways Agency control centres also supply live information for travel bulletins on many local and national radio stations and you may sometimes hear the presenters say that they are looking at Highways Agency cameras as they speak.

If your car radio is an FM version with a Radio Data System (RDS) it will probably have a 'travel announcement' button marked TA or TP. You can set this to switch over automatically to local traffic news for the area in which you are travelling whenever it is broadcast.



Key Points

- Alternative routes
- Clearly signposted
- Know what the symbols mean



If the motorway is closed for any reason, we always do our best to make sure an alternative route is clearly signposted. There are two types of diversion; planned and unplanned.

A **planned** diversion, perhaps because of roadworks is normally publicised in advance on our website, Traffic Radio and local media, variable message signs and on temporary signs at the side of the road, so that as few people as possible are taken by surprise by the road closure.

An **unplanned** or emergency diversion, usually caused by a serious incident often means that drivers are directed to leave the road without prior warning and without a clear diversion in place.

We are working with local highway authorities to agree the best diversion routes and provide signing using one of the symbols shown below. Should you be diverted off one of our roads you can simply follow the symbol and you will end up back on the road you were originally travelling on, albeit further on.



Traffic Officers and Regional Control Centres



Key Points

- Managing incidents
- Minimise disruption
- Responding to emergency telephones

More than a thousand Highways Agency Traffic Officers now patrol England's motorways to help cut congestion and improve safety. Traffic Officers work to manage incidents, help you if you have broken down and clear dangerous debris from the road.

These types of unplanned incidents cause about a quarter of all congestion, so by clearing these quickly our Traffic Officer patrols are able to make a real difference. They are supported by staff in seven regional

control centres, who answer the 7,000 emergency roadside telephones on our network. The control centres also set some of the variable message signs that warn you of dangers or delays ahead.

While the Traffic Officers' role is to minimise disruption, police officers still take charge at the scene of major incidents where there are serious injuries or it is a potential crime scene. They may need to close the road for an investigation to take place. We work with them to get the road re-opened as soon as we can.



Key Points

- Emergency roadside telephones
- Marker posts
- Location signs



If you break down, are involved in an accident or want to report something to us, it is important to pass on the exact location. Getting this right can save vital seconds in an emergency. Remember, if you use an emergency roadside telephone this will automatically relay your location to our control centre. If you're calling from a mobile phone the operator will need to know:

- Motorway or major 'A' road number
- The direction or carriageway
- The junction number or preferably details from the nearest sign or marker post.

Marker posts: If you know the name of the motorway and direction, then the number on the small marker posts will give us the extra information we need to pinpoint your location.

Location signs: Larger blue signs at the side of many motorways will also confirm the road number. The letter in the middle identifies the carriageway to us and the number at the bottom is the same distance marker you see on the smaller posts.



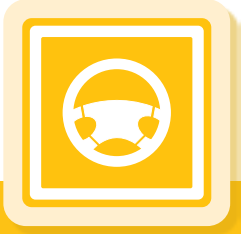
The motorway or major 'A' road route number that you are travelling on.

The direction you are travelling in.

The distance in kilometres from the start of the motorway.

Remember, on a motorway it is vital for emergency services to know which carriageway you are on otherwise they may have to travel to the next junction before they can turn around.

Commercial drivers



Key Points

- Journey planning tools
- Online guide at: www.highways.gov.uk/truckstops
- Weather alert system

We have developed tools to help truck drivers and freight transport operators plan their journeys and stay safe on our roads.

The online 'Truckstop Guide' helps you plan breaks in your journey at truckstops around England.

The guide contains details of the exact locations of the stops as well as facilities, opening times, security provision and overnight parking. There is the facility to print or email selected truckstop(s) for later reference.

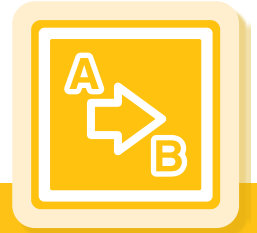
Working with Freight Transport Association and the Road Haulage Association we have a weather alert system for drivers of HGVs and high sided vehicles.

An **amber alert** means you should be prepared for severe weather, keep up to date with weather conditions and if possible, use a different route. A **red alert** means you should leave the road network and find a safe place to park until the status is reduced to amber. We will keep you informed through radio broadcasts and our website.



Key Points

- Transport Direct online journey planner
- Options for travel choices
- Step-by-step directions



If you use the internet to search for public transport journey plans, driving instructions, ticket prices or travel news, then you may want to consider adding Transport Direct to your Favourites list: **www.transportdirect.info**.

This free and easy to use website takes the hassle out of journey planning by providing you with all the travel information you need, all in one place. Transport Direct can plan any journey within Great Britain, giving you step-by-step directions, fare information and tell you about disruptions to the rail

and underground networks. It's all very well knowing what bus to take, but where do you catch it from? Transport Direct's maps will have the answer. Alternatively use the maps to find and locate the nearest hotels, restaurants, local attractions or car parks in the area. Transport Direct can also help you save fuel, save money and cut your CO₂ by showing your emissions for both car and public transport journeys.

Go to: **www.transportdirect.info** and see what Transport Direct can do for you.



You can access travel news and check bus and train times from your mobile. Just go to: **<http://mobile.transportdirect.info>** or send and bookmark your favourite journeys to your mobile phone from the main website.

Weather conditions



Check the weather before you go

Being aware of weather conditions and checking the forecast is an important part of planning your journey. The weather can have a serious impact on your journey time, so you may have to leave earlier, decide to take another route or even not to travel at all.

Warnings for severe weather affecting our road network will be displayed on our website at: **www.highways.gov.uk** and for general forecasts you can check with the Met Office at: **www.metoffice.gov.uk**

For the latest flood warning information you can check with the Environment Agency at: **www.environment-agency.gov.uk/floodwarning**

In the UK we experience a wide range of weather conditions that can change quickly. Be ready to adjust your driving to suit the conditions. It can take ten times longer to stop if roads are slippery. Slow down and allow more space for stopping.



Driving in bad weather



- **Snow:** Clear all ice and snow from all windows, lights and number plates. Demist the windows and make sure you have a clear view before you move off. On slippery surfaces, drive slowly using the highest possible gear. Avoid sudden actions - braking, sharp turns or speeding up. If you start to skid, ease off the accelerator and do not brake suddenly
- **Fog:** Slow down and use dipped headlights. Use fog lights if visibility is seriously reduced, but switch them off when it clears. Don't follow the lights of a vehicle in front, you may be too close to brake safely in an emergency
- **Rain:** Slow down. It takes longer to stop and spray will affect your visibility. Don't drive through deep lying surface water. If you have to, slow right down and drive through in first gear. Test your brakes when you come out the other side
- **Strong winds:** High-sided vehicles are most affected by strong winds, but strong gusts can even blow a car, cyclist or motorcyclist off course. Keep well back and overtake with care.



Making a more sustainable travel choice



You have thought about your need to travel, you have planned when to travel, and chosen how you will travel, by which route. What can you do as a driver or rider to make the car or motorcycle a slightly more sustainable choice?

All cars on the road today contribute to climate change because their engines burn fuel and therefore produce carbon dioxide (CO₂) every time we drive. You can easily reduce these emissions and save money too.

Your vehicle:

- Check your tyre pressures, including the spare, under inflated tyres create resistance
- Roof storage greatly increases wind resistance
- Unnecessary loads add weight your engine has to carry around
- Air conditioning is hard work for the vehicle and uses more fuel.



Making a more sustainable travel choice



Your driving:

- Think and look ahead to spot hazards early and allow yourself time to react
- Stay at or within all speed limits
- Always accelerate smoothly
- Use your gears sensibly and efficiently, selecting a higher gear as soon as possible without labouring the engine
- Idling your engine just wastes fuel and adds CO₂ emissions.

Your riding:

- Choose the right gear and engine speed to reduce how much you open the throttle
- Ride smoothly, with good observation and avoiding excessive braking
- Consider the clothing you wear and what you carry, a well-fitted and safe riding kit reduces wind drag.



Information for your region



Want to know what's coming up in your area?

We publish six different regional guides four times a year with information about big events and any planned major roadworks that might affect traffic on our network.

You can pick up a copy at places like motorway service areas or call us to have regular copies sent to you.

We can also add you to a mailing list so

you are alerted about any major new road schemes in your area.

Just speak to one of our advisors on:

08457 50 40 30*

or email:

ha_info@highways.gsi.gov.uk



Dying to take the call?



Mobile phones have many benefits. They provide security and can be a great help in an emergency. But tests have shown a driver cannot help being distracted by a phone call or text message. If you're distracted you will not register hazards or react quickly.

A conversation on a hands-free phone is no less distracting than using a hand-held one. It is illegal to use a hand-held mobile when driving. You will risk a £60 fine and three penalty points on your licence¹. Points can mean higher insurance costs.

You can also be prosecuted for using a hands-free mobile phone if you are not in proper control of your vehicle. The penalties will be the same as for using a hand-held one.

The penalties for driving carelessly or dangerously when using any phone can include disqualification, a large fine and up to two years' imprisonment.

The best advice is to **switch off before you drive off.**



Switch off before you drive off

THINK

¹ If the case goes to court you risk a fine of up to a maximum of £1,000 (£2,500 for drivers of vans, lorries, buses and coaches).

Other Department for Transport agencies



As well as the Highways Agency, there are other agencies within the Department for Transport that provide different services, help with law enforcement and improve road safety.

Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA)

- Driving licence
- Vehicle registration documents
- Car tax (vehicle excise duty).

Driving Standards Agency (DSA)

- Driving tests – practical and theory
- Keeps register of approved driving instructors
- Pass Plus training courses.

Vehicle & Operators Services Agency (VOSA)

- MOT tests
- Testing/enforcing roadworthiness standards
- Lorry, van, bus and coach licences.

Directgov

UK's Government Gateway

Helping you understand | Help | Log out

Search for you

GO

Home | Contacts | Do it online | Services

Services by subject

- Crime, justice and the law
- Education and learning
- Employment
- Environment and green living
- Government, citizens and rights
- Health and well-being
- Home and community
- Money, tax and benefits
- Motoring
- Travel and transport

Services by service

- Young people
- Britain being abroad

Do it online

Do it online

A listing of government forms, transactions and tools. Do it online when you deal with government



Pay your Court Fine online

You can pay your Court Fine online using a credit or debit card. You can also make instalment payments and pay costs, compensation and confiscation orders that have been awarded against you.

- Pay your Court fine

• Crime, justice and the law online

Find your neighbourhood policing team, pay a Court Fine online, report a consumer problem and much more...

• Employment online

Find a job, pay tax and national insurance, check your entitlement to redundancy payments and much more...

• Education and learning online

Find childcare, get information about local schools, look for courses and more

• Motoring online

Apply for a driving licence, book your driving test, tax your vehicle, check an MOT record and much more...

Tuesday, 24 March 2009

My Council



Connect to your council and find out which online services they provide

- Connect to your council

Got a question or comment?

call: 08457 50 40 30*

email: ha_info@highways.gsi.gov.uk

For live traffic information

call: 08700 660 115*

visit: www.highways.gov.uk

24 hours a day, 365 days a year

* Calls from landlines to 08457 and 08700 numbers can cost up to 8p per minute but are free from some landline providers; mobiles usually cost more. Please check costs with your service provider.

The following websites contain journey planning information for London, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland:

Transport for London: www.tfl.gov.uk

Scotland: www.trafficscotland.org

Wales: www.traffic-wales.com

Northern Ireland: www.trafficwatchni.com

Safe driving at roadworks



During 2006 two workers were killed and 19 seriously injured in the course of their work on Highways Agency roads.

For the safety of all road users and roadworkers, when you are approaching roadworks:

- Keep within the speed limit – it is there for your safety.
- Get into the correct lane in good time – don't keep switching.
- Concentrate on the road ahead, not the roadworks.
- Be alert for works' traffic leaving or entering roadworks.
- Keep a safe distance – there could be queues in front.
- Observe all signs – they are there to help you.

Remember that tiredness can kill. Take regular breaks from driving.

