

Green Flag Motoring Assistance

The Wharf
Neville Street
Leeds
LS1 4AZ
www.greenflag.com

Brake

P.O Box 548
Huddersfield
HD1 2XZ
telephone 01484 559909
facsimile 01484 559983
email brake@brake.org.uk
www.brake.org.uk



www.greenflag.com



hard shoulder safety





Green Flag's message to motorway motorists

As one of the largest roadside rescue organisations in the country, answering more than a million calls each year from stranded motorists, we know that breaking down can certainly be a frustrating and quite often frightening experience.

Tragically, each year hundreds of people lose their lives and suffer serious injuries while working or stopped at the roadside or on the motorway hard shoulder.

The hard shoulder of the motorway is a dangerous place and motorists who need to use it should bear in mind some essential safety tips to avoid putting themselves and other drivers at unnecessary risk.

With the help of charities like Brake, we have produced this glove box guide to hard shoulder safety to keep in the car and refer to. You never know when you may need it, and it could help save your own or someone else's life.

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Chris Moat'.

Chris Moat
Managing Director
Green Flag Motoring Assistance



the hard shoulder is a
dangerous place



When can I use the hard shoulder?

There are only three instances where stopping on the hard shoulder is permitted:

- In a breakdown
- In an emergency
- If told to stop by the police.

If you breakdown

In a breakdown situation the first thing motorists need to consider is the safety of themselves and other motorists. If your vehicle develops a problem:

- Leave the motorway at the next available exit and stop at a service area
- If the problem is such that you need to stop immediately, pull onto the hard shoulder and stop with the wheels turned to the left away from passing traffic
- Park as close to the left as possible, and try to stop near an emergency phone if you can
- Put on your hazard warning lights to ensure other drivers know you are there
- Do not remain inside the vehicle, instead get out by the left side passenger doors and wait on the verge, away from the traffic

- Never attempt repairs yourself on the hard shoulder. If your car develops a problem and you think you can fix it, continue to a service station, or leave the motorway and find a safe place to stop away from moving traffic before attempting the repair.

If you need to call for help

If possible use the nearest emergency phone. To find the nearest one look for the blue and white marker posts which indicate the direction of your nearest phone. The phones connect directly to the police control centre. Take note of the number of the phone and quote this when calling for help, as this will make it easier for breakdown or emergency services to find you. If you are in a particularly vulnerable position, or have a disabled person waiting inside the vehicle, make sure the other person is aware of this when you call. If it is not possible to use the emergency phone for any reason, use a mobile.



the first thing motorists
need to consider is the safety of themselves



While waiting for help to arrive

It is dangerous to wait inside the vehicle as you are at risk of being hit from the rear at high speed by passing cars. Instead, get out of the car from the left hand side using the passenger doors. Do not use the right hand side or driver doors as you will be dangerously close to the passing traffic. Remember that anything on the hard shoulder within half a metre of the white line stands a high risk of being struck by passing traffic.

Ensure all passengers exit the car safely from the left and wait for help on the verge away from the parked vehicle. Remember that one-in-ten motorway crashes involve vehicles parked on the hard shoulder.

Pets should be left securely inside the car to prevent them running out in front of the passing traffic and causing a hazard.

Disabled drivers or passengers who are unable to leave the vehicle should wait inside the vehicle with the seatbelt securely fastened and all the doors locked.

Women alone at night may feel uneasy about getting out of the car, but statistically they are at far greater risk of being hit by another vehicle while waiting in the car than of being attacked by someone.

When help arrives

Ensure the person arriving knows your name and has been sent specifically to help you. Do not stand between your own vehicle and the emergency vehicle in case the rear vehicle is hit by passing traffic. Remain on the verge as far away from the vehicle as possible while the problem is being dealt with.

Re-joining the motorway

Hopefully, once the problem has been dealt with, you will be able to continue on your journey. Get back into the vehicle via the left hand passenger doors. When re-joining the motorway it is likely you will be joining traffic that is moving at high speed, so you will need to use the hard shoulder to speed up before pulling out into a safe gap in the stream of traffic.



one-in-ten motorway crashes involve vehicles parked on the hard shoulder



In an emergency

In a crash or emergency

If you are involved in a crash or other emergency, and you are able to pull over on the hard shoulder, do so immediately to avoid obstructing the traffic, which could lead to a further crash. Call for help from the nearest emergency phone box, quoting the number of the phone box. If you or any other people involved are injured or in a dangerous position, ensure this is made clear when you phone. If possible, move passengers out of the vehicle onto the verge via the left side doors but do not attempt to move anyone who is injured unless they are in immediate danger.

Witnessing a crash

If you witness a crash on the motorway, contact the emergency services using the emergency telephones located along the hard shoulder. You should also inform the local police that cover the area where the crash occurred as they will need to take a statement from you. You may also need to provide a statement for insurance purposes if a motorist involved wants to make a claim against a third party.

If you are stopped by the police

If the police ask you to stop while on the motorway you must pull over onto the hard shoulder immediately. Failure to stop for the police is a criminal offence. Apart from landing yourself in trouble you could put other drivers at risk.

When shouldn't I use the hard shoulder?

The hard shoulder should only be used for breakdowns and emergencies. It is not a place to stop to check maps, make phone calls (except in an emergency), have a rest or go to the toilet. You should never walk on the hard shoulder, drop off passengers or pick anyone up, except in an emergency.

Drivers should never use the hard shoulder for overtaking or reversing. Both these manoeuvres are illegal and highly dangerous. If you miss an exit, continue to the next one.



call for help from
the nearest emergency phone box



What are the penalties for using the hard shoulder incorrectly?

This largely depends on the consequences of the driver's actions, but it could be anything from a police warning or caution, to disqualification and/or penalty points. In extreme cases, where a driver's actions have caused a fatal crash, a prison sentence of up to fourteen years for causing death by dangerous driving may be given.

Can I stop on the hard shoulder if I feel tired?

The hard shoulder is not intended for use as a resting point and is far too dangerous a place to stop for a nap. If you feel tired while driving, stop at the next service station where you can have a caffeinated drink and a 10-minute nap to combat tiredness. After the nap, the caffeine should have kicked in and you should feel more alert. If you are still tired, stay put until you feel refreshed and able to continue the journey.

Motorists are advised to stop for a 15-minute break at least once every two hours on long journeys to combat the effects of fatigue. This is particularly important on long monotonous roads such as motorways.

Is it ever OK to drive on the hard shoulder?

Motorists should only ever drive on the hard shoulder when slowing down to stop either for the police or in an emergency or breakdown situation, or when gaining speed to re-join the carriageway.

What should I do if I break down and there is no hard shoulder?

Stop the vehicle as far over to the left as possible and switch on the hazard warning lights. Only leave the car when it is safe to do so, preferably by the left side passenger door if possible. Call for help using the motorway emergency phones.



stop the vehicle and switch on the hazard warning lights



How can I avoid breaking down on the motorway?

The majority of breakdowns are due to poor vehicle maintenance and could have been avoided. To minimise the risk of a breakdown Green Flag advises motorists to give the car a regular service in line with manufacturer's requirements and also check the following regularly:

- wiper blades are in good condition with no tears or cracks
- screenwash, oil and water are at the recommended levels
- anti-freeze content in the washer reservoir and cooling system is appropriate for the colder weather ahead
- ensure tyres are in good condition, with no bumps or cracks in them. The minimum legal tyre tread is 1.6mm but less than 3mm may be dangerous in wet or icy conditions. Make sure the tyre pressure is correct too. Your car's manual will tell you what it should be
- the car's breakdown cover is up to date and provides adequate cover for your requirements all the lights are working and keep them clean for good visibility.

Remember, faulty batteries are the number one cause of breakdowns, so have it checked before the cold weather sets in. Many garages offer checks free of charge.

If I see another motorist who has broken down on the hard shoulder, should I stop to help?

Green Flag advises motorists not to stop and help another motorist who has broken down on the hard shoulder as it is too dangerous and better left to the professionals.

What if something falls off my vehicle?

Do not stop on the hard shoulder to retrieve car parts or other obstructive items that may have fallen from your car while driving on the motorway. Instead, stop at the next emergency telephone and inform the police.

What do I need to know if I'm towing a caravan on the motorway?

Before towing a caravan on the motorway it is important to ensure the laden weight of the caravan is no more than 85 per cent of the weight of the car. Your car manual should tell you what this is, but ask your caravan dealer if you are unsure. The nose weight should be around seven per cent of the total laden weight of the caravan, and any heavy items should be placed over the axle or slightly in front of it for optimum stability. To ensure you have clear all-round vision use extended mirrors when towing.



poor maintenance is the cause of most breakdowns



advice

Remember the speed limit on the motorway for caravans is 60 miles per hour and it is illegal to drive in the outside lane of the motorway unless other lanes are closed or blocked. It is illegal to carry passengers in the caravan and inadvisable to carry pets.

It is a good idea to carry a flashing orange beacon which can be connected up to the caravan's leisure battery in case of a breakdown to ensure you can be seen clearly by other motorists.

Where can I get further advice?

For more information about staying safe and legal on the roads, visit these websites:

Green Flag Motoring Assistance
www.greenflag.com

Brake
www.brake.org.uk

The Highway Code
www.highwaycode.gov.uk

Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency
www.dvla.gov.uk

Highways Agency
www.highways.gov.uk

Driving Standards Agency
www.dsa.gov.uk

Department for Transport
www.dft.gov.uk

Home Office
www.homeoffice.gov.uk

Local Authority Road Safety Officers' Assoc.
www.larsoa.org.uk

Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents
www.rospa.org.uk

The Caravan Club
www.caravanclub.co.uk



the hard shoulder
should only be used
for breakdowns and emergencies



thank you

A note of thanks

A special note of thanks goes to road safety charity Brake for their support, input and advice in producing this glove box guide.

About Brake

Brake is a national road safety charity dedicated to preventing death and injury on the roads and caring for road crash victims. Brake co-ordinates national Road Safety Week and works with schools, companies and community groups to educate road users about staying safe. Brake also provides services for families bereaved by road crashes, including a helpline and support literature, which is distributed by police following every death on the road in Britain.

Brake relies entirely on donations and funding from individuals and organisations such as Green Flag to enable it to continue its important work. To make a donation to Brake please call **01484 559909** or log on to www.roadsafetyweek.org.uk and click on 'donate here' to make a secure online donation.



About Green Flag

Green Flag Motoring Assistance provides roadside rescue and recovery services to almost 5m customers, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Customers have access to a national network of independent recovery agents and 6,000 qualified technicians.

Green Flag's incident management centre in Leeds handles around one million calls each year, and over 90 per cent of customers receive assistance within the hour.

How do I purchase breakdown cover?

For more information on Green Flag products and services, or to obtain a quote for breakdown cover, visit www.greenflag.com. Alternatively, call Green Flag customer services on **0845 246 1577**.



Brake works to prevent death and serious injury on our roads



Other services

Ferry Booking

Green Flag offers a booking service for people travelling to the continent. Green Flag's travel staff can help customers book all tickets and confirm departure times.

The travel service can also offer customers discounts with selected ferry companies. When people book their Channel crossing with Green Flag, they can save 10 per cent on their European Motoring Assistance.

For further details on ferry booking customers can call freephone **0800 400 638**.

Route planner

Green Flag's free online route planner provides directions from your doorstep to anywhere in Europe. Visit www.greenflag.com for details.

Vehicle Inspection Service

With one-in-three vehicles having a suspect history*, vehicle inspection is becoming an essential part of the used-car buying process. With this in mind, Green Flag Vehicle Inspection offers motorists the chance to check out a vehicle's history and mechanics prior to purchase.

Services offered by Green Flag Vehicle Inspection include:

- Comprehensive mechanical, electrical and structural inspection (323 checks)
- Status check to verify a vehicle's identity against the stolen vehicle register
- Check for outstanding finance and insurance write-offs.

For further information and prices customers can call freephone **0870 400 2410**.

*Source: HPI Limited.

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has a suspect history

