



SMART Motorways

What are SMART motorways



A SMART motorway is a section of a motorway that uses traffic management methods to increase capacity and reduce congestion in particularly busy areas. These methods include using the hard shoulder as a running lane and using variable speed limits to control the flow of traffic.

Driving on a SMART Motorway is similar in many respects to driving on a traditional motorway where you must obey the rules of the Highway Code and not exceed the National Speed limit of 70 mph or the posted speed shown in the red circular sign above the lane, which is enforced by speed cameras.



Different types of SMART motorway

There are three different types of SMART motorway.

1. **All lane running** schemes permanently remove the hard shoulder and convert it into a running lane. Lane one (formerly the hard shoulder) is only closed to traffic in the event of an incident. These roads have emergency refuge areas (ERAs) at the side of the carriageway for drivers to use if they break down or have an incident.
2. **Dynamic hard shoulder running** involves opening the hard shoulder as a running lane to traffic at busy periods to ease congestion. On

these stretches a solid white line differentiates the hard shoulder from the normal carriageway. Overhead signs on gantries indicate whether the hard shoulder is open to traffic.

3. **Controlled motorways** have three or more lanes with variable speed limits but retain a traditional hard shoulder. The hard shoulder should only be used in a genuine emergency.

On all these motorways there are automatic and CCTV monitoring systems in place to monitor traffic for any incidents that require actions being undertaken to manage traffic.

Variable speed limits

Variable speed limits can be introduced for safety reasons, such as during roadworks or if there's a stranded vehicle ahead, or to slow down traffic and ease congestion further up the motorway.



The variable speed limit is displayed on the gantries across motorways, and usually enforced by average speed cameras behind the signs.

Emergency Refuge Area (ERA)

Emergency refuge areas (ERAs), or SOS areas, are areas designed to offer a place of relative safety for stranded vehicles on roads without hard shoulders. They appear up to every 1.5 miles on 'all lane running' SMART motorways. They are marked with large blue signs featuring an orange SOS telephone symbol.

You should only use an emergency refuge area in the event of a breakdown or an accident. They must not be used for a rest stop, to make a phone call or to use the toilet.



The Red X



Regardless of where you see the sign, either on a normal traffic lane or on a hard shoulder, it simply means do not drive in the lane - it has been closed to traffic.

A closure of one or more lanes will be signalled by a red X on an overhead gantry and/or on a verge-mounted sign, meaning you must exit the lane/s as soon as possible.

Ignoring the 'Red X' sign is extremely dangerous and illegal.

Camera enforcement is in place on most SMART motorways and using a lane with a red X sign will result in an automatic £100 fine and three penalty points.

The hard shoulder must not be used if the signs over it are blank or display a red X, except in the case of an emergency/breakdown. Other variable message signs will say 'hard shoulder for emergency use only'.

Break downs on SMART motorways

If you've broken down or have been involved in an accident while on a SMART motorway, you should attempt to use an emergency refuge area.

Occupants should exit the vehicle from the passenger side and stand behind the crash barrier. The SOS telephone should be used to speak to a representative who will provide further instructions.

If you are unable to reach the nearest ERA

- Move your vehicle on to the verge as much as possible
- Leave the vehicle from the passenger side, stand behind the crash barrier and await help

If it is not possible to get to the nearside lane or exit your vehicle safely, then you should stay in your vehicle with your seat belt on and dial '999' advising that you have broken down on a motorway and unable to get to safety and follow instructions.

In all cases, switch on your hazard warning lights.

When the relevant highways authority becomes aware of a breakdown or an incident on a SMART motorway they will switch on a 'red cross' sign on the gantries above the lane you're in to stop traffic from entering it.

SMART Motorways important rules

- Never drive in a lane closed by a Red X
- Keep to the speed limits shown on the signs
- A hard shoulder is always identified by a solid white unbroken line - if there's no speed limit displayed above it or a Red X is displayed, do not use it except in emergency
- A broken white line indicates a normal running lane
- If the hard shoulder is being used as an extra lane, use the designated emergency refuge areas for emergencies
- If your vehicle experiences difficulties try to exit the motorway immediately
- If you break down, put your hazard lights on, move to an area of safety or call 999 if you are unable to
- Most breakdowns are preventable - keep your car well maintained, check your tyres, and make sure you have enough fuel for your journey

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