

STAY SAFE AT THE ROADSIDE

A vehicle breakdown can result in a dangerous situation, especially on a motorway or high speed dual carriageway. Add in poor weather conditions, awkward breakdown location and poor visibility, and the hard shoulder becomes an extremely hazardous place to be, where far too many accidents occur.

Minimise your risk

By far the best way is to minimise your risk of breaking down in the first place. Some basic daily maintenance checks listed below can reduce the number of vehicle breakdowns.

- ▶ Oil: check level and check for leaks.
- ▶ Water: check level and check for leaks.
- ▶ Electrics: ensure all systems and lights are functioning.
- ▶ Fuel: make sure you don't run out!
- ▶ Wipers: check condition of wipers and washer fluid levels, especially in winter.
- ▶ Tyres: your tyres are the only contact your vehicle has with the road, and nearly half of all premature tyre failures are due to poor maintenance.



Tyre maintenance for commercial vehicles

- ▶ Check your pressure: 20% under inflation reduces tyre life by 25% and severe under inflation causes over heating which can lead to the complete disintegration of the tyre. Tyre pressures should be checked every 2 weeks when the tyres are cold.
- ▶ Check your load: a 5% overload will reduce tyre life by 10%.
- ▶ Check for damage: punctures or cuts in the tyre caused by impact damage from nails. Kerbing damage may also lead to premature failure.
- ▶ If tyres have been re-grooved, check condition regularly.



Two thirds of accidents on the hard shoulder involve the parked vehicle being hit, with just 10% involving pedestrians. You are seven times more likely to be injured if you remain in your vehicle.

[Source TRRL report E159C/HL.]

If you do break down

Observe the following instructions for your own safety and that of other road users:

- ▶ Use the hard shoulder to slow down before coming to a halt.
- ▶ Watch out for debris or other parked vehicles.
- ▶ Park on the hard shoulder facing straight ahead, as far away from the carriageway as possible, but beware of soft shoulders and drainage channels.
- ▶ Switch on hazard warning lights in daylight and use a warning triangle.
- ▶ In poor visibility leave vehicle sidelights and hazard lights on.
- ▶ If you have a reflective jacket, please wear it.
- ▶ Exit your vehicle from the nearside if possible.
- ▶ Find a safe refuge away from the vehicle e.g. behind a barrier or up a bank.
- ▶ Take charge of any passengers.
- ▶ Attempting to repair your vehicle on a hard shoulder is highly dangerous - get professional help.
- ▶ Use the emergency SOS phones as this gives a specific location and alerts the police. Phones are indicated by blue and white markers and are never more than a mile apart.
- ▶ If unable to use an emergency SOS phone and you use a mobile phone ask the breakdown service to inform the police.

- ▶ Face oncoming traffic when using the phone.
- ▶ Give as precise information as possible regarding your location, nature of the fault, vehicle type, Gross Vehicle Weight, wheel position that requires attention (where applicable) and whether the load is hazardous, perishable or time sensitive.
- ▶ Under no circumstances attempt to cross the lanes or central reservation.

Once your vehicle has been repaired and you are ready to continue your journey, you must take care as you rejoin the main carriageway.

- ▶ Be mindful of other road users.
- ▶ Use the hard shoulder to build up speed and when a suitable space occurs signal and move off the hard shoulder.
- ▶ Try to relax and concentrate on the road ahead.
- ▶ Drive carefully.

Always remember that the hard shoulder is an extremely dangerous environment and should only be used in an emergency.

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