

Safe vehicle recovery options on motorways: Traffic officer assistance

When attending a broken down or collision damaged vehicle on our motorways and assistance from Highways England is required, call the 'Recovery in' line at the regional operations centre (ROC) relevant to your location.

South West: 0117 316 5708

South East: 01883 74 5313

West Midlands: 0121 421 8808

East Midlands: 0115 855 2014

East: 0170 760 8507

North West: 01925 29 8014

North East: 01924 24 3715

A) No Highways England assistance required

A1: If the hard shoulder **is not** being used as a live running lane then the vehicle recovery operator (VRO) can exit the emergency area (EA) as normal and use the hard shoulder to accelerate to an appropriate speed before re-joining the carriageway.

A2: If the hard shoulder **is** being used as a live running lane and the VRO can exit the EA safely without assistance:

1. The VRO should contact the regional operations centre (ROC) using the emergency roadside telephone (ERT) located within the EA.
2. Notify the ROC of their intention to leave the EA.
3. Where the casualty vehicle has been repaired, the VRO should instruct the customer how to join the carriageway safely.

B) Incident access through red Xs

In all cases where permission is requested and granted to use the hard shoulder, a closed incident access lane (closed by a red X), or reverse access, to attend a casualty vehicle, the VRO must ensure that:

1. The VRO's name and their vehicle registration are provided.
2. All appropriate warning beacons and dipped headlights are displayed.
3. Progress is made at a speed appropriate for the prevailing conditions and, never exceeding 20 mph.
4. Extreme caution is exercised for the possibility of vehicles and pedestrians entering the hard shoulder or closed access lanes.
5. In all cases where requests are refused, the VRO must abide by the decision of the ROC and advise that there will be a delay in attending the casualty vehicle.
6. The VRO will obtain and keep a reference from the ROC which can be used as authorisation.
7. Under no circumstances whatsoever may the VRO drive on the hard shoulder or closed lane (closed by a red X) of a motorway (or dual carriageway) without first of all receiving permission.

C) Assisted entry and exit to an EA

Where assistance is required to enter or exit an EA:

1. Provide the direct contact number of the vehicle recovery operator (VRO) for Highways England traffic officers.
2. The ROC will pass the following details to assist recovery if known:
 - a. The position of the vehicle occupying the EA.
 - b. Whether there is enough space for the VRO to safely enter without traffic officer assistance.
 - c. Any signs and signals set.
3. The VRO will be asked to wait within the EA.
4. The ROC will set variable message signs (lane divert or lane closure).
5. The VRO should check that traffic has cleared from the hard shoulder/lane 1 before attempting to exit the EA.
6. Further assistance with a rolling road block or physical lane closure by an available traffic officer patrol may be required.
7. Signs and signals will remain in place until the VRO has safely left scene.

D) Reverse access

1. The reverse access option may be used where access to the incident scene with traffic flow is not possible.
2. Once a forward control point can be confirmed at the front of an incident by a traffic officer or police, then the VRO can access from the downstream on-slip and leave via the downstream off-slip.

Factors to consider

ROC resource

The ROC will consider authorising any request for assistance using the following factors:

1. Time of day and traffic conditions.
2. Is the VRO in congested traffic that is significantly impeding progress?
3. Are the occupants of the casualty vehicle vulnerable?
4. Has the Highways England scene commander requested early attendance of a VRO to assist incident resolution?

Traffic officer resource

1. Once the VRO has begun the repair or recovery process, the traffic officers should normally remain, offering protection until the VRO and the casualty vehicle leave the scene.
2. During the course of a vehicle repair or recovery, a traffic officer patrol may receive an instruction to deploy to an immediate response incident.
3. Where a traffic officer resource is unavailable to assist, the police or a secondary VRO should be considered.

If you need help accessing this or any other Highways England information, please call **0300 123 5000** and we will help you.