

MPA HEALTH AND SAFETY BULLETIN



HIGHWAY CODE

In September 2021 the Department for Transport carried out a major revision of the Highway Code which included two new rules and several amendments to the existing rules.

One of the most significant introductions is a 'hierarchy of road users'. This will ensure that people who can cause the most harm in a collision, such as those in vehicles, bear the "greatest responsibility to reduce the danger they may pose to others".



So, a lorry driver will have a greater responsibility to those driving a car or motorcycle, and likewise people cycling would have a greater responsibility than pedestrians.

The hierarchy will be, in order of priority: pedestrians; cyclists; horse riders; motorcyclists; cars/taxis; vans/minibuses, with large passenger and heavy goods vehicles at the bottom.

In addition to this there are significant changes in the highway code in relation to Vulnerable Road Users.

- At a junction drivers should give way to pedestrians crossing or **waiting to cross** a road into which or from which you are turning.

- Pedestrians may use any part of the road and use cycle tracks as well as the pavement, unless there are signs prohibiting them.
- Drivers should not cut across cyclists going ahead when turning into or out of a junction or changing direction or lane.
- Drivers should give way to any cyclists in a cycle lane, including when the cyclists are approaching from behind.
- Drivers should give way to cyclists approaching or using the cycle track when turning into or out of a junction.
- Drivers should give motorcyclists, cyclists, horse riders and horse-drawn vehicles a minimum distance of 2 metres in all conditions.
- Drivers should wait behind the motorcyclist, cyclist, horse rider, horse drawn vehicle or pedestrian and not overtake if it is unsafe.
- At advanced stop lines drivers should stop sufficiently far behind the first white line so that they can see the whole area where cyclists may be waiting.
- Drivers should give priority to cyclists on roundabouts, give them plenty of room and not attempt to overtake them within their lane.
- Drivers should allow cyclists to move across their path as they travel around roundabouts.
- At roundabouts drivers should ensure that they do not cut across cyclists, horse riders or horse drawn vehicles in the left-hand lane.
- Drivers and passengers should open the door using their hand on the opposite side to the door they are opening.
- Drivers approaching a parallel crossing should give way to pedestrians or cyclists waiting to cross.
- On narrow roads, at road junctions or in slower-moving traffic, cyclists may sometimes ride in the centre of the lane and drivers should allow them to do so.



MOTORWAY DRIVING

To combat the problem of middle lane hogging on motorways, a change to the rules in the new version states “you should return to the middle lanes and then the left-hand lane when it is safe to do so”.

The aim of the changes is also to improve guidance for drivers using motorways, including what to do during a breakdown or incident.

- You **MUST NOT** stop or park on the carriageway, an emergency area or a hard shoulder of a motorway except in an emergency.
- Unless directed to do so by a police or traffic officer, **you MUST NOT reverse along any part of a motorway, including slip roads, hard shoulders and emergency areas.**
- You **MUST NOT** use a hard shoulder except in an emergency or if directed to do so by the police, traffic officers or a traffic sign.

Hard shoulder (where used as an extra lane): You can only use the hard shoulder as an extra lane when a speed limit is shown above the hard shoulder.

Where the hard shoulder is being used as an extra lane, emergency areas are provided for use in an emergency.

To rejoin the carriageway after a breakdown from:

- **a hard shoulder: build up speed, indicate, and watch for a safe gap in the traffic. Be aware that vehicles, obstructions or debris may be present on the hard shoulder.**
- **an emergency area: you MUST use the emergency telephone provided and follow the operator’s advice for exiting the emergency area. A lane may need to be closed so that you can rejoin the carriageway safely.**

If anything falls from a vehicle on to a motorway or other high-speed road, **DO NOT** remove the obstruction yourself. Stop in a place of relative safety (see Rule 275) and call the emergency services on 999. On other roads, you should only remove obstructions if it is safe to do so.

You should focus on the road ahead when passing an incident because a lack of attention may cause a further incident, collision or congestion.



In addition the two new rules in the highway code are related to motorway driving

RULE 270 (NEW RULE)

Emergency areas are located along motorways with no hard shoulder or where the hard shoulder can be used as an extra lane (see Rule 269) and **MUST** only be used in an emergency. They are marked by blue signs with an orange SOS telephone symbol and may have orange surfacing.

RULE 275 (NEW RULE)

If you need to stop your vehicle in the event of a breakdown or incident, try to stop in a place of relative safety; where you, your passengers and your vehicle are less likely to be at risk from moving traffic.

The safest place to stop is a location which is designed for parking. On motorways and other high-speed roads, the safest place to stop is a service area.

Other suitable places of safety in an emergency include lay-bys; emergency areas and hard shoulders.

Be aware that hard shoulders provide less protection than other places of relative safety because they are so close to high-speed traffic.

You and your passengers should, where possible, keep well away from your vehicle and moving traffic.

Otherwise moving traffic could collide with your vehicle, forcing it into you and your passengers.

Also, exit your vehicle by the side furthest from traffic:

- Put on high-visibility clothing if you have it.
- Get behind a safety barrier where there is one.
- **DO NOT** stand in a place where your vehicle could be forced into you if moving traffic collides with it.
- **DO NOT** return to your vehicle even if it’s raining, cold or dark.
- Remain alert and aware of vehicles or debris coming towards you.
- **DO NOT** place a warning triangle on the carriageway.
- Animals **MUST** be kept in the vehicle or, in an emergency, under control on the verge.

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