

## Supplementary written evidence submitted by RAC Motoring Services (RSM0116)

### Data on near misses on smart motorways

We do not have a record of near misses. This is because we only attend the scene once it is fully protected with a traffic officer/police with the lane closed and a reduced speed limit. However, if there is a near miss on a smart motorway during a breakdown we encourage patrols to report it if they are in attendance. We are members of the SURVIVE Group which was established to improve the safety of those who work on the road network and the travelling public. Those working in the breakdown sector follow industry-wide standards but there is no uniform method of recording near misses.

While the Committee might be best served asking Highways England for near miss data, this might also give an incomplete picture because near misses may occur before a traffic officer or the police arrive on scene.

### Do drivers know what to do in the event of a breakdown on an all-lane running smart motorway?

RAC Opinion Panel research from 2020 (sample: 2,489 drivers) – we asked drivers what they would do if they suffered a breakdown on a smart motorway with no hard shoulder and they were in a live lane?

- 7% would remain in the vehicle
- 33% said they would leave the vehicle irrespective of the risks
- 47% said they would leave the vehicle only if it were safe to do so
- 14% said they didn't know what they would do

Of those that said they would **remain in the vehicle**, we asked what they would do next:

- 38% said they would dial 999
- 40% said they would call their breakdown provider
- 13% said they would call Highways England
- 7% said they didn't know

We also asked why they would **remain in the vehicle** (all that apply):

- 89% believe it would be safer
- 14% said they wouldn't be able to get everyone out of their vehicle

Those that said **they would leave the vehicle,** we asked what side they would exit the vehicle if stopped in lane 1:

- 57% said left-hand side (passenger side) if safe to do so
- 6% said the driver's side no matter what
- 37% said either side depending on which side seemed safest to do so

Those that said **they would leave the vehicle,** we asked where they would stand/go once they've left the vehicle in lane 1:

- 93% said they would stand behind the safety barrier if there was one and well back away from the road
- 6% said they would walk to the nearest SOS area

Those that said **they would leave the vehicle in lane one,** we asked who they would call first after moving to a safe area:

- 44% said they would dial 999
- 13% said they would call Highways England
- 38% said they would call their breakdown provider

### **Proportion of contractors attending motorway breakdowns vs branded vehicles**

Those drivers unfortunate enough to suffer a breakdown on a motorway are given a priority level 3 by the RAC. Priority level 3 is for motorway breakdowns.

In 2020, between the hours of 8pm and 6am (night-time as requested), around 60% of all breakdowns were attended to directly by RAC operators on motorways, with the overall figure being 84% over a 24-hour period. The remaining number will have been attended by contractors. There would be a variety of reasons for this and would be mostly for recovery purposes. This might include extremely busy periods where demand is unusually high (usually in extreme weather) in a particular location or if the fault on the vehicle makes it unsuitable to tow.

In 2019, the RAC recorded an industry first [by launching the All-Wheels-Up recovery system](#) which enables our patrol vans to tow SUVs, 4x4s, pick-ups, vans, automatics, hybrids and even electric vehicles dispensing with the need to deploy a separate flatbed. Additionally, we have introduced [specialist, heavy duty patrol vans](#) fitted with the same recovery equipment which means they can tow the very biggest 4x4s, SUVs and EVs on the road today and even some commercial vans.

This has helped to reduce waiting times for stranded drivers as well as the need to call out independent recovery contractors.

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