

RSA



# MOTORWAY DRIVING

Údarás Um Shábháilteacht Ar Bhóithre  
Road Safety Authority

# Motorway Services and Rest Areas



## Map Key

- Motorway
- Dual Carriageway
- National Road
- On-Line Service Area
- P Rest Area
- Cities

## Motorway Driving

Every day in Ireland thousands of commuters are using our growing motorway network. All major cities in Ireland are now connected by motorway. Although motorways are statistically the safest way of moving large volumes of traffic, there are still risks to drivers who use them.

### Preparation

In the same way that your car needs to be in good condition, you also need to be fit and alert to drive on a motorway. The higher speeds on motorways mean that things can happen very quickly – a moment's lapse of concentration could have severe consequences. Prepare for your journey properly and plan where you can take a break from driving.

Before you begin a motorway journey, make sure your vehicle








- Is fit to carry out the journey at motorway speeds,
- Has the correct tyre pressure,
- Has enough oil and coolant, and,
- Has enough fuel to at least take you to the next service station,

Also make sure that any loads carried or towed are secure and that you have enough money or a suitable pass if you are using a tolled motorway.



## Motorway Information Signs

All motorway signs are blue. The following table identifies the most common signs and what they mean.

Motorway signs	What they mean
	<p>Motorway ahead</p> <p>There is an entrance to a motorway ahead and the road users listed on the sign <b>must not</b> enter the motorway.</p>
	<p>Entry to motorway</p> <p>The road user is now entering a motorway and <b>must</b> obey motorway rules. The sign usually appears beside the 'Motorway ahead' sign.</p>
	<p>Countdown sign</p> <p>The driver is 300 meters from the next exit off the motorway.</p>
	<p>Countdown sign</p> <p>The driver is 200 meters from the next exit.</p>
	<p>Countdown sign</p> <p>The driver is 100 meters from the next exit.</p>
	<p>Motorway ends 500m ahead</p> <p>There are 500 meters to the end of the motorway.</p>
	<p>End of motorway</p> <p>The driver has reached the end of the motorway.</p>

## Motorway speed limits

The maximum speed limit on a motorway is 120km per hour unless:

- there are signs stating another speed limit, for example, warning signals to highlight road works; or
- you are driving a vehicle that is subject to a lower limit such as a bus or truck.

Remember your total stopping distance at 120km per hour in dry conditions is 107.5 metres (27 car lengths). This is about the length of a soccer pitch.

## Towing a trailer

Drive at the right speed. The maximum legal speed limit for a vehicle towing a trailer is 80km per hour. Depending on the width of your trailer you may need to fit extension mirrors to your car to make sure you can see the road behind you when your trailer is attached. Ensure your load is evenly distributed to reduce the chance of the trailer swaying, especially in high winds or when large vehicles overtake you.

## You must not enter a motorway if:

- you are a learner driver or do not hold a full licence for the category of vehicle you are driving;
- your vehicle cannot travel at a speed of at least 50km per hour;
- your vehicle has an engine capacity of 50cc or less;
- your vehicle does not use inflated tyres;
- you are walking, cycling or moving animals;
- you drive a motorised wheelchair (also known as an invalid carriage).

## General advice for drivers

### When you are joining a motorway

- Always be careful and pay attention when you join a motorway.
- Build up speed on the acceleration lane before merging with motorway traffic.
- Signal in good time to make sure other motorway users know you intend to join the motorway traffic.
- As you approach the motorway on the slip road, check your mirrors and your blind spot for a safe gap in the traffic.
- Give way to traffic already on the motorway.
- Change your speed to fit safely and legally into the traffic (lane1). Stay in the slip road if it continues as an extra lane on the motorway. Avoid crossing a solid white line that separates the traffic lanes.
- Stay in the left-hand lane (lane1) long enough to adjust to the speed of traffic before you consider overtaking.



### **When you are driving on a motorway**

- You must drive ahead. You are not allowed to turn or reverse. It is an offence to drive against the flow of traffic on a motorway.
- If you find yourself driving against the flow of traffic, pull in immediately to the hard shoulder and stop. Contact the gardaí by dialing 999. Do not attempt to turn your vehicle. Wait for help in a safe place.
- Drive at a safe and legal speed that will not interfere with traffic already on the motorway.
- Keep a safe distance from the vehicle in front. Leave a bigger gap when you are driving on wet or icy roads or in fog.
- Variable messaging warning signs may be used to advise motorists of potential hazards on the motorway. Do not stop or park on the motorway except in an emergency or when you are told to do so by the emergency services or gardaí.
- You must not drive on the hard shoulder as it is a motoring offence to do so and you could get penalty points.

### **Using lanes properly**

You should know the purpose of each lane on the motorway.

To help you understand when you should move from one lane to another, the picture below gives a number to each lane. The lane nearest the hard shoulder is lane 1 (also known as the inside lane). On a two-lane motorway, the lane nearest to the centre of the road is lane 2 (or the outside lane). On a three-lane motorway, lane 3 is the outside lane.



- **Lane 1** – You should always use this lane for normal driving. Stay in this lane unless you are overtaking.
- **Lane 2** – You should only use this lane for overtaking. You must move back to lane 1 once you have finished overtaking and it is safe to do so. You can also move into lane 2 to allow vehicles coming from your left to join the motorway.
- **Lane 3** – You should only use this lane if traffic in lanes 1 and 2 is moving in queues and you need to overtake or make room for merging traffic. Again, you should move back to lane 1 as soon as it is safe to do so.

When overtaking, only move between two lanes at a time. For example, to move from lane 1 to lane 3, first move into lane 2 and wait to move to lane 3 until it is safe to do so.

**Do not use the outside lane if you are driving:**

- a goods vehicle with a design gross weight of more than 3,500 kilogrammes such as a lorry or heavy goods vehicle (HGV);
- a passenger vehicle with seating for more than eight passengers; such as a bus; or
- a vehicle towing a trailer, horsebox or caravan.

**When you are leaving a motorway**

- You will normally leave the motorway by a slip road to your left, unless signs say that a lane leads directly off the motorway. You should watch out for the signs below that let you know that you are getting near your exit. Move safely into the left-hand lane or lane 1 well before reaching your exit.



*300m to next exit*

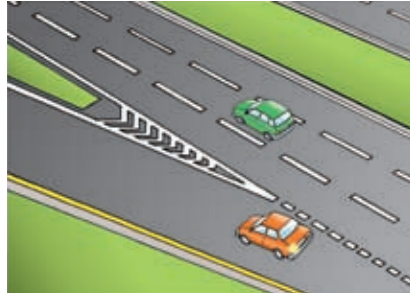


*200m to next exit*



*100m to next exit*

- When you leave the motorway or use the link road between motorways, your speed may be much higher than you think. Check your speedometer and slow down as some slip roads have sharp bends.
- When you leave the motorway, or it comes to an end, you will see the signs below.



*Motorway ends  
1km ahead*



*Motorway ends  
500m ahead*



*End of Motorway*

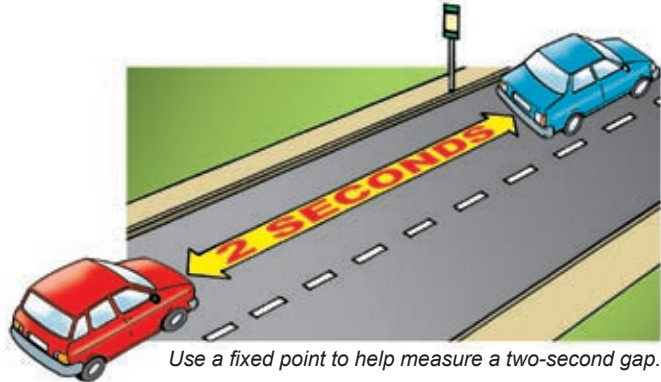
## Signalling

- Once you are on the motorway, you must signal before every lane change.
- Check your mirrors regularly, as you must always be aware of what is going on around you.
- Know the blind spots on your own and other drivers' vehicles. Observing and scanning ahead of the vehicle in front of you can help you to avoid unnecessary braking.
- Remember, before changing lanes follow the 'mirror, signal, mirror, manoeuvre' method. Traffic may be coming from behind you at speed so remember to check your mirrors to help you judge how fast they are approaching. This will increase your chances of seeing a vehicle that is travelling in your blind spot.



## Keeping your distance

Always leave enough room between you and the vehicle in front to allow you to stop safely. In dry conditions, you should make sure that you are at least two seconds behind the vehicle in front. In bad weather, make sure you are four seconds behind.



*Use a fixed point to help measure a two-second gap.*

A good way to see if you are four seconds behind the vehicle in front is to choose a point such as a lamp post or road sign. When the vehicle in front of you passes the post or sign, say the following rule twice – ‘only a fool breaks the two second rule’. Check where your vehicle is in relation to the chosen point. If you have moved past it before finishing the saying, you are driving too close to the vehicle in front.

If you are driving in slippery conditions such as ice and snow, slow down and allow up 10 times the distance for braking.

## Driving in fog

Dense fog seriously reduces your visibility and makes driving very dangerous. Our advice is to switch on dipped headlights and fog lamps, reduce your speed and keep a safe distance from the vehicle in front. If the fog closes in, reduce your speed further and take your time getting to your destination.

The added dangers posed by dense fog is that a collision involving one vehicle can quickly involve many others, especially if driving too fast and too close to one another. The greatest risk is of a multiple-vehicle pile-up on roads with higher speeds such as motorways and dual carriageways. As you enter fog, check your mirrors and slow down. Use your foot brake lightly so that your lights warn following drivers.

## What to do if your vehicle breaks down?

- Look out for marked parking areas.
- Move your vehicle to the hard shoulder. Park as near to the left as you can. If you cannot do this, take steps to warn other drivers such as switching on your hazard warning lights.
- Use the roadside phone to contact the Gardai. This automatically lets them know your exact location. If you cannot use this phone use your mobile but be aware they will require information about your location.
- Do not place any warning device such as a triangle on the motorway as it is too dangerous.
- Never try to do repairs yourself on the hard shoulder.
- Wear a high visibility vest. Always carry one in the vehicle.
- Do not walk on the motorway. Leave your vehicle through the left-hand door and make sure your passengers do the same. Leave animals in the vehicle or, in an emergency, keep them under control on the verge.
- Make sure that passengers keep away from the motorway lanes and hard shoulder, and keep children under control.
- Wait for help on the embankment side of the motorway well behind the crash barrier.
- If for some reason you are unable to follow the above advice, you should stay in your vehicle with your safety belt securely fastened and switch on your hazard lights.
- Before you rejoin the motorway after a breakdown, build up your speed on the hard shoulder before merging into traffic. Be aware that other vehicles may have stopped on the hard shoulder.



## Toll plazas

When approaching a toll, reduce your speed appropriately. Always leave a safe gap between your vehicle and the vehicle in front. All toll roads in Ireland, with the exception of the M50 eFlow barrier-free tolling system, are managed by a conventional barrier-operated toll plaza. For these toll roads, the toll payment options are:

- manual lanes with a toll booth attendant;
- automatic coin machine lanes; and
- payment by electronic toll tag.

## Toll lane signage

Toll plaza facilities offer a range of payment options for motorists. The electronic signs at each toll lane show whether the lane is open or closed and how you can pay. The lane signage symbols are as follows:



This sign shows that a toll collector manually operates the lane and that all methods of payments are accepted.



This eToll sign is the sign for electronic toll collection. (This is available in all lanes).



This sign shows that this is an automatic coin machine lane and that coins are the only method of payment accepted. No change will be given in this lane.



This sign shows that credit cards are accepted in the lane.



Heavy goods vehicles (HGVs) are not permitted in this lane.



Lane open



Lane closed

### **eFlow barrier-free tolling**

The M50 is a radial route around Dublin. eFlow barrier-free tolling is in operation between Junction 6 (M50/N3 Blanchardstown) and Junction 7 (M50/N4 Lucan). There is no toll plaza on the tolled section of the road. The eFlow barrier-free toll system records trips by photographing a vehicle's license plate number. For information on how to pay your toll visit [www.eflow.ie](http://www.eflow.ie).

## **Motorway tunnels**

### **Dublin Port tunnel**

The Dublin Port tunnel connects the M1 (south of Dublin Airport) to the docklands. Specific road safety issues apply when you are approaching, driving through or leaving the tunnel.

#### **Using the tunnel**

- Check your fuel before entering the tunnel.
- Take off your sunglasses.
- Switch on your dipped headlights.
- Tune into any FM radio station to hear safety instructions in case of an incident.
- Keep a safe distance from the vehicle in front of you.
- Obey the speed limit.
- Do not stop except in an emergency.
- Do not turn or reverse.

#### **If you breakdown or are in a collision**

- Switch on your hazard warning lights.
- Switch off your engine and leave your key in the ignition.
- Go to the emergency station. Use the emergency phone to contact an operator.
- Obey operator instructions on FM radio and electronic signs.
- If your engine is on fire, switch off your engine and leave the vehicle immediately.

#### **If there is a fire in the tunnel**

- If there is smoke or fire behind you, drive out of the tunnel.
- If there is smoke or fire ahead, stop your vehicle, turn off the engine, leave the key in the ignition, leave your vehicle immediately and exit the tunnel by the nearest pedestrian exit.

### If you are instructed to stop in the tunnel

- Switch on your hazard warning lights.
- Keep a safe distance between vehicles.
- Switch off your engine and leave your key in the ignition.
- Obey operator instructions on FM radio and electronic signs.
- If instructed to exit the tunnel, go to the nearest exit which will be indicated by distance on the wall.

### Rest areas and lay-bys

The map shows rest and service areas. Areas marked 'P' are lay-bys where you can stop safely. They have no facilities.

Three motorway service areas are now open at:

- Lusk on the M1 motorway, Co. Dublin;
- Castlebellingham on the M1 motorway, Co. Louth; and
- Enfield on the M4 motorway in Co. Westmeath (see map).

These are online service areas which include parking for cars, motorbikes, coaches and HGVs, public toilets, playgrounds, baby changing areas, fuel, and food. They are open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.



## Penalty points

There are a number of penalty points that you could get if you are driving unsafely on a motorway. They include:

Title of offence	Penalty points on payment of fixed charge	Penalty points on court conviction	Fixed charge	
			Amount paid in 28 days	Amount paid in 28 days
Speeding	2	4	€80	€120
Dangerous overtaking	2	5	€80	€120
Driving a vehicle on a motorway against the flow of traffic	2	4	€80	€120
Driving on the hard shoulder on a motorway	1	3	€80	€120
Driving a HGV or bus on the outside lane on a motorway	1	3	€80	€120
Failure to leave appropriate distance between you and the vehicle in front	2	4	€80	€120
Failure to comply with 'keep left' and 'keep right' signs	1	3	€60	€90
Failure to comply with traffic lane markings	1	3	€60	€90

If you get 12 penalty points on your licence in three years, you will be banned from driving for six months.

# Motorways In Ireland



# Working To Save Lives



Údarás Um Shábháilteacht Ar Bhóithre  
Road Safety Authority



Páirc Ghnó Ghleann na Muaidhe, Cnoc an tSabhaircín, Bóthar Bhaile Átha Cliath, Béal an Átha, Co. Mhaigh Eo  
Moy Valley Business Park, Primrose Hill, Dublin Road, Ballina, Co. Mayo  
local: 1890 50 60 80 fax: (096) 25 252 email: [info@rsa.ie](mailto:info@rsa.ie) website: [www.rsa.ie](http://www.rsa.ie)