

## The sound of sirens – Tips on how to help the emergency services

We can be driving to a destination, minding our own business when out of nowhere there's the sound of sirens. We tend to have to locate which direction the sound and vehicle is coming from before we navigate ourselves into a position on the road where we can move



out of the way for emergency services vehicles. In support of the recent Emergency Services Day, IAM RoadSmart's Richard Gladman, head of driving and riding standards, has some tips to remind drivers and riders how to reduce the risks we face in these situations, aid the emergency services, and make the road a safer place for us all.

### Where to stop

It's important to stay calm when you hear sirens and see blue lights. You will need to find somewhere safe so you can pull over to the left and stop. If in a congested area, try to stay out of bus lanes and avoid mounting on kerbs, pavements and at traffic islands. Don't make any sudden or unexpected moves.

### Slow down, move over

You may find there can be breakdowns, collisions and lots of congestion on all types of roads. These situations can be very distressing and potentially dangerous – for both emergency services vehicles as well as for occupants of stranded vehicles. When manoeuvring in these situations it's vital to help those involved by slowing down, moving over and passing to the right-hand side of the road.

### Traffic lights

Emergency services vehicles can find ways to navigate around you at traffic lights. You may need to pull over to the left a little if they are passing through a congested queue. However, if you are first in the queue at a red light, it's important to stay where you are, do not pass the stop line, unless you have been advised to do so by a police officer.

### Motorways and dual carriageways

When driving on motorways and dual carriageways, pull over to the left while avoiding using the hard shoulder and allow any emergency vehicles to pass in the outside lane. Ideally get ready to do this if you are stopped in a queue behind an incident before the blue lights appear in your rear-view mirror. In slow or stationary traffic, if an emergency vehicle cannot get through, their positioning of the vehicle as it approaches you will signal whether you should move left or right. Once the emergency vehicle has passed by you, stay vigilant and don't not move until other vehicles following the emergency vehicle have also passed.

## Motorway incidents

Highways Traffic Officer and emergency services vehicles are likely to stop in motorway and dual carriageway lanes, when attending to or approaching an incident. They can be protecting other vehicles involved or removing debris which can be blocking the road. When driving, keep an eye out for the overhead red X gantry sign or other instructions which are displayed. These signs aid in smoothing the flow of traffic, help drivers predict there could be an incident ahead and clear the lanes.

## Stopped emergency service vehicles

If you see an emergency vehicle stopping or has already stopped, you should prepare for people to be exiting the vehicle as they step into action. You will need to slow down, keep your eyes open and anticipate the actions of others. This will give you enough reaction time to the situation at hand, this will give everyone enough time to stay safe.

Richard said: "By following this advice you can do your part to help emergency service teams nationwide and make the roads as safe as possible for all road users. Drivers of emergency service vehicles are trained to a high standard. They do not want you to panic and will not expect you to put yourself in danger or damage your vehicle to make way for them. If you have caused a problem by mistake, stay calm and be guided by them, they know what space they need and will ask you for it."

Find out more about our advanced driving and riding courses by visiting us here:

<https://www.iamroadsmart.com/courses>.

Gem Motoring Assist have developed some engaging animations showing others how to interact with emergency services, to contribute to a safer road environment. To watch these animations and find out more go to: <https://www.bluelightaware.org.uk/>