

RSA



MOTORWAY DRIVING

Údarás Um Shábháilteacht Ar Bhóithre
Road Safety Authority

Motorway Services and Rest Areas



Map Key

- Motorway
- Dual Carraigeway
- 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 Vehicle needs to be in good condition, you also need to be fit and alert to drive on a motorway. If you only recently passed your driving test or moved to Ireland you should consider taking some additional practice on motorway driving with an RSA approved driving instructor. 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,
- In the case of an electric vehicle ensure there is enough power to at least take you to the next charging station.

If Electric vehicle (EV) users are using the motorway system they are urged to plan their journeys by using the charging station map available. This map can be found at <https://www.esb.ie/our-businesses/ecars/charge-point-map>. The map receives a live feed from the ESB management system and it shows the charge point status and availability. Also, you can download the “ecar connect” app to your smart phone to receive the same information.

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 must not enter the motorway.</p>
	<p>Entry to motorway</p> <p>The road user is now entering a motorway and must obey motorway rules. The sign usually appears beside the 'Motorway ahead' sign.</p>
	<p>Countdown sign</p> <p>The driver is 300 metres from the next exit off the motorway.</p>
	<p>Countdown sign</p> <p>The driver is 200 metres from the next exit.</p>
	<p>Countdown sign</p> <p>The driver is 100 metres from the next exit.</p>
	<p>Motorway ends 500m ahead</p> <p>There are 500 metres to the end of the motorway.</p>
	<p>End of motorway</p> <p>The driver has reached the end of the motorway.</p>
	<p>Lane gain sign</p> <p>An additional lane is joining the motorway</p>
	<p>Next exit sign</p> <p>Indicates distance to the next exit and supplementary routes.</p>

Emergency closure of sections on the Motorway

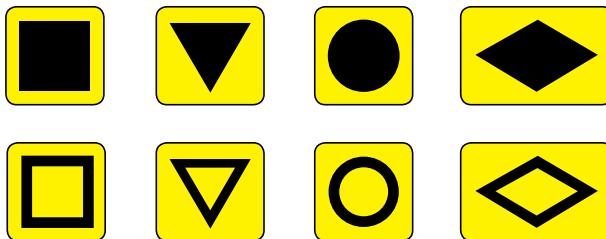
These signs (diagram) are widely and successfully used on the motorway network and are strategically placed to inform motorists of an emergency or alternative diversion route for motorways.

There are four shapes — square, triangle, circle and diamond — but each can be shown filled or in outline, making eight distinct symbols. Close to motorway junctions, and on roads near to or following the line of a motorway, they are commonly placed on direction signs.

If a motorway is closed — let's say because of an accident — then the Gardaí will close the road at the previous junction and force traffic to leave the motorway.

These signs instruct motorists to follow a particular symbol in order to re-join the motorway at the next junction.

Diversion routes are carefully chosen to follow roads of a suitable standard and width to carry all motorway traffic, and may make detours to avoid low bridges or other obstructions.



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, towing a trailer, caravan or horse/cattle box.

Remember the RSA recommend you leave a gap of at least your total minimum stopping distance at 120km per hour, which is a minimum of 102 metres (approx. 26 car lengths) in dry conditions. This is about the length of a soccer pitch. In wet conditions they recommend that drivers increase the gap to at least 169 meters.

- The ordinary speed limit for HGV's is increased to 90km/h on motorways where no speed limit is in place.
- The ordinary speed limit for buses is increased to 100km/h on motorways where no lower speed limit is in place.

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 or maintain a speed of at least 50km per hour;
- your vehicle has an engine capacity of 50cc or less;
- you drive a tractor that cannot travel at or maintain a speed of at least 50km/h
- 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 dialling 999 or 112. 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 unless in an emergency or if ordered to do so by An Garda Síochána. It is a motoring offence to do so and you could incur 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.



Auxiliary lane

Auxiliary lanes normally link the off ramp of the road you are leaving, with the next available off ramp or exit and may also be used to adjust your speed when joining the Motorway.

These are normally identified by a broken white line to the right of the auxiliary lane, with road markings that are shorter, closer, and wider than the broken white lines normally seen in lane 1, 2 or 3



- **Lane 1** – You should always use this lane for normal driving. Stay in this lane unless you are overtaking.
- **Lane 2** – On a two lane motorway, 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. On a 3 lane motorway, you may stay in this centre lane while there is slower moving traffic in lane 1.
- **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. 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 maximum authorised mass (MAM) of more than 3,500 kilogrammes such as a lorry or heavy goods vehicle;
- a vehicle towing a trailer, horsebox or caravan.

You may use it, however, in exceptional circumstances when you cannot proceed in the inner lane because of an obstruction ahead.

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

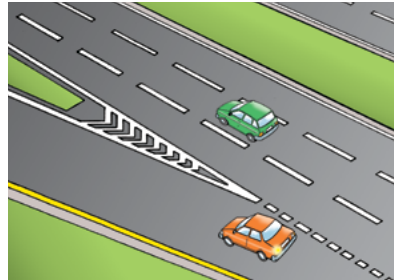


200m to next exit



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.
- If you miss your exit, drive on to the next exit. You must not attempt to cross the hatched markings or reverse back up the hard shoulder.
- 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



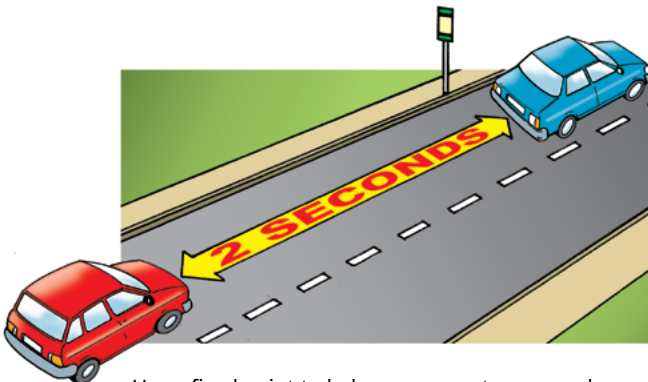
End of Motorway

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.
- Overtake only on the right, unless traffic is travelling in slow moving queues and the traffic queue on your right is travelling more slowly than you are. If you intend to move from a slower lane to a faster lane, adjust your speed first.
- Before you start to overtake, remember 'mirror, signal, mirror, manoeuvre', and look in your blind spots. Check that the way is clear (behind and ahead) and signal well in advance.
- Remember, before changing lanes follow the 'mirror, signal, mirror, manoeuvre' routine. 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.
- Be particularly careful at dusk, during darkness, and in poor weather conditions when it is more difficult to judge speed, distance and stopping distance. Signal and return to your original lane as soon as possible.

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 to 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 lights, 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 Motorway Traffic Control Centre (MTCC). This automatically lets them know your exact location. If you cannot use this phone use your mobile to ring the MTCC on 0818 715 100 and advise them of the information provided on the nearest LRI sign or LRM marking.
- Do not place any warning device such as a triangle on the motorway as it may be too dangerous.
- Never try to do repairs yourself on the hard shoulder.
- Wear a high visibility vest. Always carry at least one in the vehicle and preferably one for each passenger.
- 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.

Location Reference Indicator (LRI) signs and Location Reference markings (LRMs) along motorways assist road users to accurately communicate their location in the event of an incident or breakdown. The road user can relay the information contained on the nearest LRI sign or LRM marking to advise exactly where they are.



All LRI signs contain 3 lines of information that inform the road user of;

- The route number on which they are travelling;
- The direction of travel, this can only be one of N, S, E or W;
- The distance from the start point of the route.

LRI signs are located on the nearside verge and are typically spaced every 500 metres although this may be modified at some locations to avoid inappropriate sites.



Location Reference Markers (LRMs) supplement the LRI signs. Location reference Markers are painted in the hard shoulder parallel to the road. The LRM indicates the route and the direction of travel along with distance from the start of the route. In addition the LRMs indicate the direction to the nearest emergency telephone. LRMs are painted in the hard shoulder every 100 metres.

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.

Prior to entering ANY toll lane:

1. Adhere to the **50km/h** maximum speed limit.
2. Ensure that your tag is mounted correctly on the vehicles windscreen in accordance with the tag suppliers instructions and terms and conditions of use. This maximises the ability of the electronic tag to be detected and read correctly.
3. Your tag account must be activated for multi plaza use (your tag provider will activate the tag as part of the registration process) and must be in credit before use.
4. An audible beep sound from your tag does not imply that the tag has been processed correctly. This sound merely indicates that the tag has been detected by the toll equipment – please be vigilant of the traffic signals and barrier and only proceed when indicated to do so.
5. Some toll lanes are height restricted with the maximum height restriction indicated on approach. You should know the height of your vehicle (including any roof mounted equipment and/or trailer) and only proceed where your vehicle height is less than the displayed height restriction.
6. Should you require assistance whilst in any automatic lane, please use the assistance button provided to connect you to the Toll Plaza control room. The control room functions on a 24hr per day basis and can assist with any toll related matter.
7. **NEVER ATTEMPT TO REVERSE FROM A TOLL LANE.**
8. **NEVER ALIGHT FROM YOUR VEHICLE UNLESS IT IS AN EMERGENCY.**

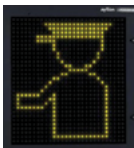
When entering an express lane:

1. Motorcyclists should never attempt to use Express Lanes.
2. Express Lanes are limited to CARS AND LIGHT COMMERCIAL VEHICLES ONLY.
3. Adhere to the 50km/h maximum speed limit.
4. A minimum distance of **30 metres** must be maintained from the vehicle in front throughout the entire lane. Keep your distance.

- Express lanes are height restricted with the maximum height restriction indicated on approach. You should know the height of your vehicle (including any roof mounted equipment and/or trailer) and only proceed where your vehicle height is less than the displayed height restriction.
- Your tag account must be activated for multi plaza use (your tag provider will activate the tag as part of the registration process) and must be in credit before use.
- An audible beep sound from your tag does not imply that the tag has been processed correctly. This sound merely indicates that the tag has been detected by the toll equipment – please be vigilant of the traffic light and barrier and only proceed when indicated to do so.
- Be prepared to stop suddenly, keep your speed below the 50km/h maximum limit and maintain the minimum 30m distance from the vehicle in front.**
- Traffic signals will indicate whether or not it is safe to proceed. Be vigilant of the traffic lights and overhead gantry signs especially the red X or amber divert arrow. When indicated to divert, please use the escape lane and proceed to the next available open lane. Do not attempt to cross multiple lanes. All lanes at the Plaza are equipped to detect and process tags. Should you require assistance please use the assistance button in the lanes and you will be attended by the Tolling staff.

Toll lane signage

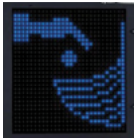
Toll plaza facilities offer a range of payment options for motorists. The electronic signs at each toll lane show whether the lane is open or closed and how you can pay. The lane signage symbols are as follows:



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).



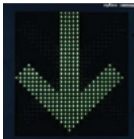
This sign shows that this is an automatic coin machine lane and that coins are the only method of payment accepted. No change will be given in this lane.



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

Important

As you approach the toll plaza use these signs to help decide which lane is suitable for you as early as possible – so you can avoid last minute or sudden lane changes, which can be dangerous to you and other road users.

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 and avoid extra penalties visit www.eflow.ie.

Motorway tunnels

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.
- Obey Lane Control Signals.
- Do not stop except in an emergency.
- Do not turn or reverse.
- Drivers of HGVs should be aware there may be weight or the number of axles restrictions in some lanes in the tunnel.

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.

Signage in tunnels

Be aware that as with all emergencies, care needs to be taken to find the safest evacuation route. Take note of information provided on signage to determine what action you should take.



Emergency
(Tunnel Lay-by)



Fire Extinguisher,
Telephone and Lay-by



Fire Extinguisher
and Telephone



Pedestrian Exit

Travel Time Information

The TII (Transport Infrastructure Ireland) Variable Message Signs aid in managing traffic and keeps drivers better informed across the road network in Ireland. By coupling the TII's journey time technology these VMS are used to display real time travel times across the network.

Variable Message Signs (VMS) are currently located on various sections of the motorway network in Ireland and aid in:

- Real Time Journey Information;
- Active Traffic Management of Unplanned Events and Incidents;
- Weather Events;
- Management of Planned Events;
- Road Works;
- Major National Events; and
- Safety Campaigns.



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.

There are various motorway services available throughout the country. Development of these motorway services is ongoing. Further information can be found on the Transport Infrastructure Ireland web site on www.tti.ie. These are online service areas which include parking for cars, motorbikes, coaches and HGVs, public toilets, playgrounds, baby changing areas, fuel, electric charging points and food. They are open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.



Penalty points

There are a number of penalty points and fixed charged notices that you could incur if you are driving unsafely on a motorway. For Example Speeding, Dangerous Overtaking, Driving a vehicle on a motorway against the flow of traffic, Driving on the hard shoulder on a motorway, Driving a vehicle (subject to an ordinary speed limit of 90 km/h or less) on the outside lane of a motorway, Failure to leave appropriate distance between you and the vehicle in front, Failure to comply with keep left / keep right signs, Failure to comply with traffic lane markings.

Title of offence	Penalty points of payment of fixed charge	Penalty points on court convictions	Fixed charge	
			Amount paid in 28 days	Amount paid in next 28 days
Speeding	3	5	€80	€120
Dangerous overtaking	3	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 vehicle (subject to an ordinary speed limit of 90 km/h or less) on the outside lane on a motorway 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	3	5	€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

To view the full list of penalty points and fixed charged notices visit www.rsa.ie or www.garda.ie. They can also be viewed in the appendices section of The Rules of the Road Book. If you incur 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.

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