



Information Booklet

Emergency Services Driving Standard

Acknowledgments

The RSA would like to acknowledge the contribution that the members of the ESDS Panel have made towards the development of this publication



Údarás Um Shabháilteacht Ar Bhóithre
Road Safety Authority



An Stiúrthóireacht Náisiúnta um Dóiteáin agus Bainistíocht Éigeandála
National Directorate for Fire & Emergency Management



What is ESDS?

ESDS stands for Emergency Services Driving Standard – a driving standard for emergency services drivers.

Representatives of the principal emergency services and related organisations in Ireland met with the Road Safety Authority (RSA) to discuss the possibility of developing a common driving standard for emergency services personnel. It was agreed that all services could work together to develop a common standard. The standard is voluntary and has no statutory footing.

Who is involved with ESDS?

A working panel (group) was set up with members drawn from:

- The RSA (Chair),
- Civil Defence,
- The Irish Coast Guard,
- The Defence Forces,
- An Garda Síochána,
- Health Service Executive National Ambulance Service,
- The Pre-Hospital Emergency Care Council,
- The Chief Fire Officer's Association,
- The Irish Prison Service,
- National Directorate for Fire and Emergency Management.

The job of this group was to look at ways to develop a standard for emergency vehicle drivers and work towards putting it into practice. The panel proposed a modular approach with three levels to suit the different needs of the individual organisations. The three levels are referred to as Emergency Services Driving Standard (ESDS) Levels 1, 2 and 3.

Why is an Emergency Service Driving Standard needed?

Creating a culture of safe and responsible driving is essential for reducing deaths and casualties on Irish roads. Emergency services drivers should understand that their presence on the roads has an impact on other road users so they need to act responsibly at all times.

The Emergency Services Driving Standard aims to develop and sustain a spirit of cooperation, caution and courtesy in emergency service drivers. Emergency service drivers should aim to achieve an excellent standard of driving that acts as an example to other road users.

The main aim of this driving standard is to benefit emergency services drivers and other road users by:

- reducing the particular risks associated with the driving of emergency service vehicles,
- making sure that patients and passengers are safe and comfortable, and
- cultivating the attitude that responding to an emergency should never involve actions which could lead to the death or injury of any person.

What will ESDS focus on?

The Emergency Services Driving Standard focuses on the following areas of driver competence:

- Knowledge – driving laws, rules and vehicle operation;
- Control of the vehicle;
- Control in traffic situations;
- Recognising, managing and avoiding risks;
- Driving professionally; and
- Emergency Response Driving (Level 3 only).

What is the structure of the ESDS?

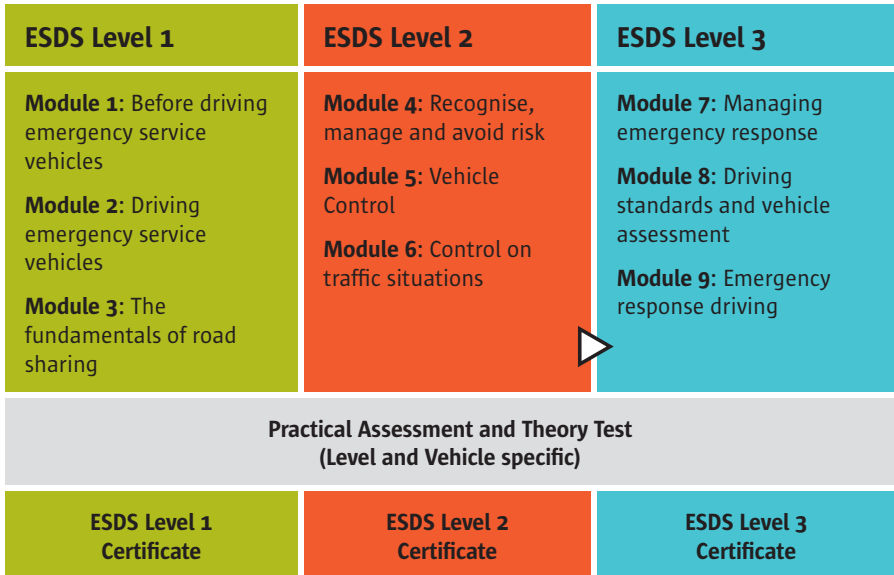
The Emergency Services Driving Standard (ESDS) has three levels:

1. **ESDS Level 1** – This is the entry level and sets out the training, learning and assessment that will produce competent and responsible emergency service drivers.
2. **ESDS Level 2** - Describes the training, learning and assessment for emergency service drivers and includes the principles and skills set of 'Roadcraft'. '**Roadcraft**' is a recognised system of vehicle control in the training for emergency service drivers that develops a methodical and systematic approach to driving. It increases safety by giving the driver more time to react in complex situations as they have a greater awareness and ability to anticipate hazards.
3. **ESDS Level 3** –This level refers only to services who by law can drive using blue lights and sirens in emergency response situations when this does not endanger the safety of other road users. An example of this is when an emergency services vehicle exceeds the statutory speed limit. This applies only to emergency services who are specified in Section 87 of the Road Traffic Act 2010 as follows:
 - An Garda Síochána,
 - the Ambulance Service, and
 - the Fire Service.

This level sets out a series of principles and response tactics which are compatible with Roadcraft and focus on the driver's attitude towards emergency response driving.

Creating correct behaviour and a responsible attitude to driving skills greatly reduces the risks associated with emergency response driving. The standards will ensure that drivers fully understand their responsibility to manage the risks associated with emergency response driving and, in doing so, they will help to keep themselves and the public safe.

Figure 1



What is the legal position regarding drivers of emergency services vehicles?

The Road Traffic Act 2010 includes a provision which covers the driving or use by members of specific emergency services of their emergency vehicles.

Health and Safety Legislation for employers, employees and volunteers must be respected. Emergency services drivers must consider the potential reactions of other road users whether they're responding to an incident or on routine tasks. As with all services provided, driving standards should ensure that the individual driver or the organisation they represent will not be subject to civil or criminal litigation. Drivers must know and understand the law and how it applies to each organisation in line with their specific driving policies.

What does having a siren and emergency lights on the vehicle mean?

Road Traffic Legislation outlines the specific emergency service vehicles that are allowed to fit emergency lights and sirens.

Vehicles with emergency lights and sirens are still subject to road traffic law. Lights and sirens are simply warning devices to let other road users and pedestrians know that there is an emergency vehicle responding to an emergency situation. Emergency services drivers **must not** use the warning equipment to travel at unsafe speeds. They must drive safely and in line with the law.

Emergency services drivers should also remember that over-use of warning equipment can cause confusion and create an unnecessary risk to the general public.

Are there any road traffic exemptions for emergency vehicle drivers?

Some emergency services drivers are exempt from general Road Traffic Legislation in the performance of their duties but **only** if their actions don't endanger the safety of other road users. The term '**in the performance of the duties of that member**' covers a range of day-to-day emergency service activities. If exemptions to the road traffic legislation are used, it must be in accordance with Section 87 of the Road Traffic Act 2010.

Emergency services drivers must always abide by Road Traffic Legislation including the following:

- Driving under the influence of an intoxicant
- Driving without reasonable consideration
- Driving without due care and attention
- Dangerous driving

Emergency services drivers can be investigated and prosecuted if their driving is deemed to be dangerous. If they are convicted, any endorsements are recorded on their drivers licence.

Where can I go for ESDS training?

ESDS Certification will only be available to drivers who are put forward by the emergency service provider they work for. The Road Safety Authority (RSA) will hold a register of ESDS trainers throughout the country. Some approved driving instructors (ADI) provide normal learner driver training and also ESDS training. To make sure a trainer is ESDS registered, the RSA will provide a list on its website of ADI Trainers who are registered under ESDS.

Only drivers eligible to avail of legal exemptions under the Road Traffic Act can undertake ESDS Level 3 training and assessment.

What's involved in the training?

Throughout the ESDS process, trainees will be encouraged to reflect on and assess all aspects of their own driving. This will make them more aware of how they drive. It will involve:

- examining what they have been doing,
- why they have been doing it (or not doing it), and
- determining what they need to do to become a safe and responsible emergency service driver.

Trainees will be encouraged to take the time to carry out self-assessment and self-reflection. This helps them to remember what they've learned which, in turn, helps the trainer to deliver the training programme.

How is ESDS assessed?

The assessment consists of a theoretical and practical examination. The assessment will be carried out by registered ESDS assessors. The assessment aims to ensure that the knowledge, skills and understanding at the level in question has been achieved.

ESDS Certification will issue when the theoretical and practical examination has been successfully completed. An ESDS Driver Certificate is valid for 5 years, an ESDS Trainer Certificate is valid for 2 years and an ESDS Assessor Certificate is valid for 3 years.

ESDS Recertification will be applicable for ESDS Drivers, ESDS Trainers and ESDS Assessors.

How should Emergency Service Providers approach ESDS?

Emergency Service Providers who are thinking about ESDS training should consider the roles and responsibilities of their drivers and decide what level of training they need. They should also make sure that the type of vehicle used for training is similar to the vehicle the driver uses in their work.

The ESDS Initiative is applicable only to Emergency Service Organisations that have signed the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the RSA and to ESDS Certified Approved Driving Instructors (ADIs).

All ESDS certification will be RSA approved and will be transferable from one provider to another. This means that the qualification stands even if the driver moves to another service. If a driver has ESDS certification and they move to a different service, the new service can decide if the driver needs refresher or additional training even though the driver was certified while operating in another service.

What will ESDS achieve?

It will improve the driver's:

- awareness of the need to share the road in a safe way (while showing due care for themselves and other road users);
- attitude to risk;
- willingness to accept responsibility;
- ability to take precautions;
- ability to choose ways of driving that reduces the risk of collisions or incidents;
- awareness of the need for responsible emergency services driver behaviour;
- knowledge of legal requirements and regulations in relation to emergency service vehicles and how they impact on individual organisations; and
- awareness of the reasons for the regulations that affect them.

The overall aim of this driving standard is to benefit Emergency Services Drivers and other road users by:

- significantly reducing the particular risks associated with the driving of emergency service vehicles; and
- making sure that patients and passengers are safe and comfortable.

Objectives

The RSA encourages road safety through significantly improving driving behaviour. The ESDS helps this process by:

- working with other services to develop best practice driving standards.
- ensuring that the register of ESDS trainers, drivers and assessors is kept updated.
- awarding certification on successful completion of ESDS assessment.
- awarding recertification on successful completion of ESDS assessment.
- ensuring ESDS driving assessments and theory tests are conducted in a reliable, valid, transparent and fair manner.

Learning materials

The following ESDS related publications are available from the RSA website:

- ESDS Guidance Manual
- ESDS Competence Framework
- ESDS Syllabus
- ESDS Tactical Response Guidelines
- ESDS Standard Operating Procedures and Marking Guidelines
- ESDS Drivers Guide
- ESDS Trainers Handbook
- ESDS Theory Test Information

Support documents

- Rules of the Road – Current Edition
- Roadcraft – Current Edition
- Relevant Road Traffic Legislation
- Other RSA road safety publications.





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