

Emergency Advice: Encountering a Vehicle Travelling in the Wrong Direction

When driving on motorways, we can sometimes feel that we are travelling on one of the safest types of road. Traffic is travelling in the same direction, and the carriageways are separated by a central barrier.

Motorways are recognised as the safest way of moving large volumes of traffic, mainly because vehicles are travelling in the same direction and they remove the risk of a head on collision.

However, there is always a possibility of encountering a vehicle travelling in the wrong direction.

Motorway driving can become monotonous. This can cause drivers to relax their concentration or allow their attention to drift, particularly when the perceived danger is separated from them by a central barrier.

We must never allow familiarity or monotony to reduce our level of concentration.

Concentration, observation and anticipation are vital skills for every driver. We should always expect the unexpected, because a vehicle travelling against the normal flow of traffic could be encountered on any section of motorway.

By remaining constantly alert, we can give ourselves more time and space to recognise a hazard, assess what is happening and respond safely.

Particular care should be taken when approaching motorway exits and slip roads. These areas require increased awareness because a vehicle travelling in the wrong direction may enter the motorway via an exit or slip road.

The RSA advises every driver when using any section of road to:

- Stay alert.
- Look as far ahead as possible, and be aware of what's happening behind you.
- Anticipate what may happen and plan your response and always expect the unexpected.
- If you are unsure about a developing situation ahead, reduce your speed appropriately.
- Never allow familiarity with a motorway, or any road you regularly drive on, to reduce your concentration.

Emergency: If you encounter a vehicle travelling in the wrong direction

If you encounter a vehicle travelling towards you in the wrong direction on a motorway:

- Stay calm and avoid any sudden or dangerous manoeuvres.
- Create as much space away from the oncoming vehicle as possible
- If the immediate danger has passed, continue your journey.

- When it is safe to do so, leave the motorway and pull into a designated parking area or motorway service area.
- Call the Gardaí on 999 or 112 and report the wrong-way vehicle.
- Give the motorway and your direction of travel and, if possible, provide the vehicle's location and a description.
- Provide any other information that may help the Gardaí identify the vehicle or locate it.
- Once you have reported the incident and the immediate danger has passed, continue your journey only when it is safe to do so.

If you accidentally find yourself driving against the flow of traffic

The RSA advises:

- **Pull into the hard shoulder immediately and stop.**
- **Do not attempt to turn your vehicle.**
- **If it is safe to do so, leave the vehicle using the doors on the side away from the traffic.**
- **Move yourself and your passengers to a safe place behind the crash barrier, well away from the motorway lanes and hard shoulder.**
- **Call the Gardaí on 999 or 112.**
- **Wait for help in a safe place.**

If it is not safe to leave the vehicle, remain inside with your seatbelt securely fastened and switch on your hazard warning lights.

Do not attempt to correct the situation by turning, reversing or continuing against the flow of traffic.

Remember: If you miss your motorway exit, continue to the next exit. Never reverse or attempt to turn around on the motorway.