

## The Dangers of Stopping in Emergency Lanes

### Introduction

Emergency lanes are provided for vehicles that have broken down and to give access to emergency services. However, emergency lanes are the most dangerous place on the motorway. The estimated life expectancy when stopped there can be less than 20 minutes! The gases industry has reported multiple severe accidents with vehicles or persons that were impacted while standing in emergency lanes.

### Scope

This Safety Information is focused on raising awareness of the risks of stopping in emergency lanes. While the focus is on heavy goods vehicles for the transport of dangerous goods travelling on motorways, the guidance given in this publication may also apply to other types of vehicles on other types of roads.

### Learning more about the dangers of stopping in emergency lanes

1. Are your drivers and other transport function personnel aware of the risks associated with stopping in emergency lanes?
2. Do you raise awareness of the risks associated with stopping in emergency lanes included in your driver training programme?
3. Do your drivers have precise instructions on what to do and what not to do if they are forced to stop in an emergency lane?

*If the answer to any of the above questions is 'no', then you should consider taking action!*

**THIS TRANSPORT SAFETY INFORMATION RAISES AWARENESS OF THE RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH STOPPING IN EMERGENCY LANES.**

## Severity of incidents

When incidents occur in the emergency lane, the consequences can be severe. The industrial gases industry has seen several such incidents.



The driver of a tanker transporting refrigerated liquefied nitrogen was struck and killed by another truck when he stopped on the emergency lane while he was checking a leaking valve in the rear cabinet.

In another incident, pictured above, a truck loaded with LPG cylinders stopped in the emergency lane because of a burst tyre. Whilst waiting for assistance, the cylinder truck was hit by another truck carrying steel bars. The bars pierced the cylinders starting a major fire, which destroyed the truck and caused cylinders to burst. The driver of the LPG truck died.

In a third case, the driver of a tanker fell asleep on the motorway and drove at full speed into a car, which had broken down and had pulled over into the emergency lane. The car driver was killed.

### Attention should be given to the following:

- Drivers should only use the emergency lane as a last resort.
- If safe to do so, the driver should continue on to the first rest area, parking zone or leave at the first exit and find a safe place to stop.
- The longer a driver or his vehicle is in the emergency lane, the greater the risk.
- Drivers should never park in emergency lanes which is illegal in most countries.

### If a vehicle breaks down and cannot be driven off the motorway, the driver should:

- pull into the emergency lane if present and stop as far to the side away from the traffic as possible;
- put hazard lights on. Static lights alone tend to attract other vehicle drivers who assume the vehicle is on the road;
- put on a reflective jacket;
- all vehicle crew should leave the vehicle by the door on the passenger (non-traffic) side;
- inform other vehicle crew of the hazards;
- put out warning sign(s) behind the vehicle at an appropriate distance if safe and permitted to do so ;

**WARNING** – The driver should face the direction of oncoming traffic and walk behind protective barriers where available.

**WARNING** – The driver should be aware that motorway traffic causes extreme air turbulence.

- telephone the emergency services. If nearby and safe to do so, use the roadside emergency telephone rather than using a mobile phone. This pinpoints the driver's position;
- stay near vehicle, upstream of the traffic (to avoid being struck by debris in case of a collision), but away from the emergency lane and behind a protective barrier, if possible; and

- not attempt any repairs until help arrives.

If a vehicle breaks down and cannot be driven into an emergency lane, the driver should:

- switch on your hazard lights;
- leave the vehicle only if it is safe to do so. If in doubt, he should stay in the vehicle wearing the seat belt;
- if it is safe to leave the vehicle and follow the advice above;
- if it is not safe to leave the vehicle, call the emergency services from within the vehicle; and
- wait until the emergency services arrive.

## Conclusions

Emergency lanes are the most dangerous place on the motorway. Pulling into an emergency lane should be avoided as far as possible. If pulling into an emergency lane becomes necessary, attention shall be paid to the risks involved and these shall be mitigated as soon as possible by at least following the guidance in this publication. Breakdowns should be avoided by adequately maintaining and inspecting vehicles – see TSI 09, *Vehicle Specification and Maintenance*

## References

EIGA SI-TS 09, *Vehicle Specification and Maintenance*, [www.eiga.eu](http://www.eiga.eu).

## Further information

EIGA SI-TS 01, *Transport Safety Information, an Overview*, [www.eiga.eu](http://www.eiga.eu).

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