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## Are UK motorists smart about Smart Motorways?

## New research from Europcar UK reveals that 2 in 5 Brits are unaware of the hard shoulder speed limit

<https://www.europcar.co.uk/>

Despite being introduced in 2006<sup>1</sup>, according to the latest research from Europcar UK it seems that Smart Motorways – and how they can be used – is still not fully understood by UK motorists. As we head into one of the busier times of the year on UK roads, Europcar UK, a subsidiary of Europcar Mobility Group, a major player in mobility markets, conducted research<sup>2</sup> amongst UK motorists to find out what drivers understand about Smart Motorways.

Whilst 70% of motorists who responded understood why Smart Motorways were introduced, only 2 in 5 (41%) understood the practicalities of how they should be used, such as what the speed limit is if the hard shoulder has been activated for use. Yet, failing to understand the laws that govern these roads may lead to a fine or points on a licence, dependent on the offence.

“When driving over the summer, whether in their own car or a rental vehicle, it is vital that motorists understand how Smart Motorways should be used, especially if driving on unfamiliar roads”, said Gary Smith, Managing Director, Europcar UK Group. “As Smart Motorways become more common, it’s worth holidaymakers taking the time to research any that they may need to use to get to their destination to avoid falling foul of any potential traffic offences.”

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.rac.co.uk/drive/advice/driving-advice/smart-motorways/>

<sup>2</sup> 'Smart Motorways' Survey conducted by Gorkana on behalf of Europcar UK – 19<sup>th</sup> June 2018. 200 respondents



Smart Motorways are stretches of motorway that monitor and manage the flow of traffic<sup>3</sup>. There are several ways they operate - including hard shoulder running, controlled motorway (using variable speed limits) or a red X on the overhead gantry.



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Findings from Europcar UK's new poll illustrated the confusion surrounding Smart Motorways. Almost two thirds of respondents knew what to do when a Red X appears on the overhead gantry. Yet, 23% thought an 'All Lane Running' meant that only broken down vehicles could use the hard shoulder.

The rules that govern hard shoulder usage are clearly a point of confusion. Whilst 66% of respondents correctly knew not to drive in a hard shoulder when closed, only 41% knew that when in operation the speed limit varies dependent on traffic or emergencies. Speeding on the hard shoulder can be picked up by one of the many smaller speed cameras in operation on Smart Motorways yet only 38% of respondents knew these were in operation.

The potential to be fined is also a possibility for half of the respondents who were unsure of what to do if their car broke down whilst other vehicles are using the hard shoulder as a normal lane. Only half answered correctly that they should stop in the nearest emergency refuge area (ERA), leaving the motorway at the first available exit if that is not possible.

Gary Smith concluded: “Familiarity is bound to be key to helping motorists understand the rules that apply to Smart Motorways. Those that answered incorrectly may not have many Smart Motorways near where they live, so have little practice using them. If this is the case,

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.highways.gov.uk/smart-motorways-programme/>

<sup>4</sup>[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/537715/S160223\\_Making\\_motorways\\_smarter\\_-\\_A5\\_Leaflet\\_-\\_interactive.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/537715/S160223_Making_motorways_smarter_-_A5_Leaflet_-_interactive.pdf)



anybody who is planning a long drive this summer should make an effort to understand how these Motorways function before they hit the road.

“Driving a reliable and well maintained vehicle, with roadside assistance, is also important for peace of mind when embarking on a long journey. And this is where a rental vehicle can be a real bonus. Vehicles in the Europcar UK fleet are on average less than 6 months old and are regularly serviced and maintained.”

Ends

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