Never drive in a lane closed by a Red X. It indicates that the lane is closed to traffic. You must move out of that lane as there may be an incident or people working ahead. A Red X can be displayed on gantry signs above each lane or on large signs above the side of the carriageway.

Any of the lanes can be closed by a Red X and arrows indicate the available lanes. It’s illegal to drive in a lane closed by a Red X sign. If you’re caught, the police can issue you with a fixed £100 penalty and three points and, in some cases, more severe penalties or a court appearance.
Variable speed limits often appear lit up on overhead signs, displayed within a red circle. These help steady the flow of traffic and reduce ‘stop-start’ traffic jams on certain sections of motorway.

They can be set at busy times, or because of a hazard or incident. As well as the police, speed cameras are in operation on our motorways, for enforcing speeding offences. And if you go over the speed limits, you’re breaking the law and could receive a fine.
Keeping left helps the traffic flow and avoids frustration with lane-hoggers, so we all have a safer, smoother journey.

You should keep left unless you’re overtaking. And you should always drive in the left-hand lane when the road ahead is clear.

If you are overtaking a number of slower-moving vehicles, you should always return to the left-hand lane as soon as you are safely past.

Slow-moving or speed-restricted vehicles should always remain in the left-hand lane of the carriageway unless overtaking too.
Knowing what to do in an emergency or a breakdown is the key to keeping yourself and others safe. Most breakdowns are avoidable and simple vehicle checks can help you have a safer journey. Check your tyres, fuel, oil and water. If your car appears to have problems:

1. Exit the motorway or get to an emergency area or hard shoulder and use the free phone provided.
2. If that’s not possible, move left onto the verge.
3. Get out of the left side of your car and behind the barrier if you can and it is safe to do so.
4. Get help – contact your breakdown provider or Highways England on 0300 123 5000.
5. If you break down in moving traffic and cannot leave your car, keep your seatbelt and hazard lights on and call 999.
Whatever part of England’s motorway network you’re using, we want you to stay safe, follow the signs and keep us all moving. England’s motorways connect people to families and friends, workers to jobs and businesses to their customers, which helps our nation thrive.

To find this document on our website, and to find out more, visit highwaysengland.co.uk/motorways

For an accessible version of this publication please call 0300 123 5000 and we will help you.