

Our reference: 100594
Your reference:

By Email: [REDACTED]

**Safety Engineering and Standards
Official Correspondence Team**
Highways England
Woodlands
Manton Lane
Bedford
MK41 7LW

31 December 2019

Dear [REDACTED]

M25 All Lanes Running – junctions 23 - 27

I am writing to confirm that we have now completed our search for the information, which you requested on 3 December 2019 about the all lane running section of the M25 between junctions 23 and 27.

Your questions are in bold text with our answer directly below:

Q1. Regarding the M25 ALR section J23-27, can Highways England confirm that since April 2014, HETOs have recorded more than 1,000 near misses?

A1. A near miss is “an event not causing harm, but has the potential to cause injury or ill health”¹. This definition is different to how the term “near miss” may be more widely understood. For example, it does not necessarily mean a situation where vehicles narrowly avoided each other, it encompasses anything which had the potential to cause injury or ill health.

Near misses are proactive reports intended to prevent any future adverse event, so include situations with low potential to cause harm. We actively encourage reporting of near misses as part of our learning culture.

For our recording purposes near misses include CCTV and telephony faults, through to road users driving into coned off areas. None of the 1485 incidents recorded on the M25 J23-27 since April 2014 resulted in any injuries.

Highways England was formed in 2015 and set out three imperatives for the new Company. The first of these is safety. As part of our five-year plan, we actively encouraged a culture where near miss reporting is positively encouraged to help us to continually improve the safety of Traffic Officers.

Q2. Can you confirm that a 'near-miss' is logged when an incident occurs that has the potential to cause harm to Traffic Officers?

¹ <https://www.hse.gov.uk/toolbox/managing/accidents.htm>

A2. Yes, but it is more accurate to say that a Near Miss is any event which has the potential to cause harm. It is also not exclusive to the safety of Traffic Officers.

Q3. On the M25 J23-27 how many near misses were there in the five years up to the introduction of ALR in 2014?

A3. There were 72 recorded Near Misses in the five years up to the introduction of ALR in 2014. The upturn in near misses since 2014 is consistent with the increased focus on proactive reporting across the company since the formation of Highways England.

Q4. Can HE confirm that a sign just before J24 on anti-clockwise section of M25, took two years to be replaced and get working?

A4. From examination of our records of faults and repairs we can confirm that there has been no sign in this location out of service for two years.

Q5. Can HE confirm that at J26-J25, three consecutive signs were defective for more than a month?

A5. From examination of our records of faults and repairs we can confirm that at no time have three consecutive signs been faulty for more than a month.

Q6. Why were the signs out of action for this amount of time?

A6. Not applicable.

Q7. Do the signs comply with the regulations?

A7. All messages, signals and legends displayed on our variable message signs comply with the Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions

Q8. Have temporary blind signs had to be installed on this J23-J27 section of the M25?

A8. Temporary blind signs have been installed at various locations along the verge between Junction 23 and 27 to assist with setting up temporary traffic management. These signs are not used to support normal operation of the road network.

Q9. Can these signs only be maintained inside lane closures?

A9. The blind signs require lane closures to maintain them.

Q10. Has it not been possible to close these lanes in order to maintain these signs?

A10. Lane closures within the M25 J23-27 are possible and have been used to access and maintain the blind signs.

Q11. What's the longest period an ALR/SMART MOTORWAY sign/camera has been out of action?

A11. On the M25, the longest a sign or camera has been out of action is 336 days. This was a variable message sign (VMS) located close to Junction 25. After the fault was registered on the 13 Feb 2018 a repair was scheduled, however some of the parts required were not readily available and the planned access to the network was delayed several times by other works and traffic incidents.

It is important to note that this particular VMS is only providing the ability to display supporting information to drivers. At this location, the key mandatory information (speed limits and Red Xs) is displayed on signals mounted above each lane. These signals were unaffected. It is also worth noting that when a sign is not working, we have procedures in place to set messages on the nearest upstream sign, if required.

If you have any queries about this letter, please contact me. Please remember to quote reference number FOI 100594 in any future communications.

If you are unhappy with the way we have handled your request you may ask for an internal review within 2 months of the date of this response for Freedom of information requests and within 40 days for Environmental Information Regulations requests. Our internal review process is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/highways-england/about/complaints-procedure>

If you require a print copy, please phone the Information Line on 0300 123 5000; or e-mail info@highwaysengland.co.uk. You should contact me if you wish to complain.

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF



Yours sincerely

**Safety Engineering and Standards
Official Correspondence Team**

