

Meet Highways England's control room operator and star baker

But by night, Saima Shahzadi swaps the multiple computers and takes on a very different role by cooking up a treat with mouth-watering cakes, many of which have helped to raise hundreds of pounds for charity.

The 41-year old from Bearwood has worked as a control room operator for Highways England in Birmingham for the past 13 years.

I love what I do because it's nice to make a difference and to know that you have helped to keep people safe, says Saima.

We want everyone to get home safe and well and my job is key to that by monitoring CCTV, working with our traffic officer service on patrol and working with partners during incidents to make sure they don't come to any harm. My role is about helping to get traffic moving as quickly and safely as we can.

Saima is a keen baker and says it helps her to unwind when she leaves work.

She recently found her love of baking some five years ago and has been doing it as a hobby ever since.

There are some days when it's been really busy and when I get home I like to bake because it helps me to unwind and take my mind off work.

Saima added:

Concentration is key to my job and it is the same with baking because you have to keep an eye on various things, often all at the same time. I like to think that I'm able to juggle lots of different things and deal with multiple deadlines all in one go.

Outside of work, I really enjoy the challenge of creating something different and I am always keen to try and support charity events by baking, she adds.

It's nice to know that I have helped to raise money for good causes and in doing so, help those less fortunate than myself. And if people enjoy the taste, that's even better.

Saima is also backing Highways England's recent safety campaign aimed at drivers – in one of the busiest times of the year for breakdowns on England's motorways.

New data from the company shows more than 48,500 motorway breakdowns happened over the summer holiday period, between the final week of June and the first weekend of September last year.

Around a quarter of summer breakdowns are caused by punctures or other tyre issues. Vehicles running out of fuel and engines overheating are also other common reasons for breakdowns on motorways.

In her job, Saima often helps stricken motorists who contact her via the orange SOS telephones at the side of motorways.

She added:

The summer is always a very busy time for the control room staff and we're often speaking to motorists that have either run out of fuel or because a vehicle has broken down. It's really important that people carry out basic vehicle checks before setting off to make sure they can reach their destination safely and help to keep everyone moving on England's motorways.

Highways England is advising drivers that regular car checks help avoid breakdowns.

Check tyres

prior to setting off on a long/significant journey, check your tyre pressures are suitable for the load and the condition of your tyres, including the spare. Look out for cuts or wear and make sure the tyres have a minimum tread depth of 1.6mm, which is the legal limit.

Check engine oil

Use your dipstick to check oil regularly and before any long journey, and top up if needed. Take your car back to the garage if you're topping up more than usual.

Check water

To ensure you have good visibility, always keep your screen wash topped up so you can clear debris or dirt off your windscreen.

Check lights

If your indicators, hazard lights, headlights, fog lights, reverse lights or brake lights are not functioning properly, you are putting yourself and your family at risk. In addition, light malfunctions can be a reason for your vehicle to fail its MoT.

Check fuel

Before setting out, check your fuel levels and make sure you have enough to get to your destination.

Highways England has also issued five basic safety tips to follow if your car does break down on a motorway:

- Get away from the traffic. Exit the motorway or get to an emergency area or hard shoulder and use the free phone provided.
- If that's not possible, move left onto the verge.
- Get out of the left side of your car and behind the barrier if you can and it is safe to do so.
- Get help – contact your breakdown provider or Highways England on 0300 123 5000.
- If you break down in moving traffic and cannot leave your car, keep your seatbelt and hazard lights on and call 999.

Read more information about [driving on motorways](#)

General enquiries

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

Media enquiries

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.