

Press release: Red X warning for North West's motorway drivers

Highways England statistics show that around one in 10 drivers in the North West do not take notice when red Xs are used to close lanes, with many waiting until they reach an incident before changing lanes.

Red Xs are displayed on overhead signs to close lanes for several reasons, including an accident or breakdown, debris in the carriageway, or because of a person or animal on the road. Lanes are also closed to help emergency services get through or to provide a safe space for road workers.

Highways England has released new CCTV footage which shows a car narrowly avoiding a collision with a lorry as the driver changes lanes on the M60 near Whitefield.

The vehicle had been travelling along a lane closed by a red X and moved over just seconds before reaching two Highways England traffic officers who were helping the driver of a broken-down car by the central reservation.

Driver risks lorry collision after ignoring Red X

Traffic officer Ben Cookson, 24, is based at Highways England's Milnrow depot and was one of the officers who responded to the incident. He said:

We'd done everything we could to keep everyone safe by stopping behind the broken-down car with our emergency lights flashing, putting out an incident sign and displaying red Xs to close the lane but there were still drivers leaving it until the last few seconds before pulling in.

It does make you bite your nails when you see something like that and you always have to have one eye on what's going on behind you to stay safe while you're trying to deal with an incident.

My job is to keep the roads moving safely, so I'd urge any drivers who don't take notice of red X signs to think about the impact it would have on their own and other people's lives if they were involved in a collision. Red Xs are always displayed for a reason so it's just not worth the risk of ignoring them.

Ben Cookson – Highways England Traffic Officer

The footage of the driver ignoring a lane closure on the M60, risking a collision with two traffic officers and a stranded driver, was filmed using a CCTV camera inside a Highways England traffic officer vehicle.

It is illegal to ignore a red X sign and the police could issue drivers with

a £100 fine and three points if they are observed driving in a closed lane.

Tips on staying safe on motorways are available on the [smart motorways web page](#).

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.