

Don't make M25 mistakes, AA Trust tells drivers on new controlled-speed M42

Drivers using the "actively-managed" stretch of the M42, which sees variable speed limits being operated from Monday onwards, must obey speeds on overhead signs and not assume that there is a grace period for offenders, says The AA Motoring Trust.

When the variable and controlled stretch of the M25 was opened in August 1995, some drivers assumed that camera-enforced speed signs were advisory or disregarded them on occasions when the signed speeds seemed to contradict road conditions. Many complained when they were issued speeding tickets.

The AA Motoring Trust has sought and received assurances from the Highway Agency that, where reasons for slower speeds are not obvious, electronic message signs between junctions 3A and 7 on the M42 will tell drivers why they need to slow down.

"When it first started, the M25 variable speed control was a high-tech solution to congestion, but with a low IQ. This time, with the M42, we hope its a high-tech system with much better intelligence," says Paul Watters, head of roads and transport policy.

"The only real threat is from driver unfamiliarity with Active Traffic Management procedures on motorways. Most motorists in the Midlands will have to learn the lessons of 10 years ago on the M25 - hopefully with less of a surprise."

Variable speed limits is the first stage of Active Traffic Management on the M42 and other features will include:

- Hard-shoulder running - next year the hard shoulder will be opened to traffic, when needed, to improve flow. Motorists will notice an extra speed sign over the hard shoulder lane, which will be marked with a red X when the lane is to be used for emergencies only;
- Emergency Refuge Areas - motorists will already notice lay-bys at regular distances along the hard shoulder. These will act as refuge areas for vehicles that break down while the hard shoulder is being used to increase road space in congested periods. Even though hard-shoulder running starts next year, The AA Motoring Trust advises drivers to use the Emergency Refuge Areas from now on where possible. This reduces the danger of being stationary on the hard shoulder.
- Smoother traffic flow - drivers will experience greater use of the inside lane by all vehicles as the regulated speed of traffic evens out across all three lanes. This increases lane usage and motorway capacity.

"Variable speed control on the M25 has shown that drivers can get to their destinations more quickly as the smoother flow reduces the chances of congestion pulses where the traffic slows down and faster traffic behind slows right down and builds up," says Paul Watters.

"Naturally, there will be a learning period during which motorists will come to appreciate the advantages. Unfortunately, some drivers wont adapt as quickly as others and, if they try to force the pace, they will be caught on speed camera."

NOTES TO EDITORS: Full details of the M42 Active Traffic Management are available at: www.highways.gov.uk/atm

Read about the [M25 Controlled Motorway Pilot](#) (8038k)