

Our ref: FOI 744,240

Your ref:

OT Directorate Services Team Manager
9th Floor
The Cube
199 Wharfside Street
Birmingham B1 1RN

22 November 2016

Dear

Thank you for your email of 27 October 2016 to our customer contact centre asking for risk assessment information in relation to safety barrier defects. I am writing to confirm that we have now completed our search for the information.

In your email of 27 October you asked the following question:

Please provide a copy of the risk assessments(s) used when determining that the risks associated with a defective safety barrier on a central reservation of a dual carriageway or motorway should be responded to by the imposition of a temporary speed limit reduction for periods of weeks or months rather than by making repairs to the barrier in a timely manner.

The following DMRB standard applies to all strategic road network situations where a decision is made that could impact the safety of any of the road populations (users, workers & others):

<http://www.standardsforhighways.co.uk/ha/standards/dmr/vol0/section2/gd0412.pdf>

It outlines an approach to undertaking risk assessments, to ensure all those who may be impacted are considered in the risk assessment.

More specifically, damage to safety barriers is assessed against a scoring sheet contained within a contractual document (AMM129/10 – *Lane Restrictions at Barrier Repairs*) which is used by Highways England service providers and was developed using the above DMRB standard. A copy of this document can be found on our website:

[http://assets.highways.gov.uk/freedom-of-information/disclosure-log/A1%20Trunk%20Road%20\(Water%20Newton,%20Cambridgeshire\)%20Temporary%2050mph%20speed%20restriction%20order%202013-692956/CRS_692956_AMM129%2010%20Lane%20Restrictions%20at%20Barrier%20Repairs.pdf](http://assets.highways.gov.uk/freedom-of-information/disclosure-log/A1%20Trunk%20Road%20(Water%20Newton,%20Cambridgeshire)%20Temporary%2050mph%20speed%20restriction%20order%202013-692956/CRS_692956_AMM129%2010%20Lane%20Restrictions%20at%20Barrier%20Repairs.pdf)

The ethos of this document is to find the optimal balance between road user risk posed by a safety barrier that has been damaged and offers an unknown level of containment/protection and the road worker safety risk which will result from undertaking any intermediate repair or a barrier replacement.

The decision on undertaking the repair is based on a risk assessment. The risk assessment considers factors related to:

- the length of damaged barrier,
- level of damage,
- whether the feature it protects is vulnerable or if it is to protect 3rd parties,
- the average traffic flows & speeds at the site and
- the accident history.

The risk assessment uses a simple numeric scale to determine high, medium or low risk sites. The same factors that make a site high risk for road users make it high risk for road workers.

AMM129/10 does not prescribe specific actions to be taken in any case, but does offer guidance on suitable responses to the various risk ratings. The document is clear on the need to consider the impact on traffic flows and in most cases the suggested responses advise limiting works to off peak times. However, it acknowledges that there will be high risk situations when the optimal response in particular for the road worker is to act immediately to affect a full repair. This is to limit the removal of temporary traffic management following a temporary repair and redeployment of it at a later time for the full repair to take place.

The essence of the guidance is that barrier repairs should be undertaken in a timely manner, or at least within seven days, being mindful of risk and impact on traffic flows. There is an acknowledgement that there may be exceptional circumstances that prohibit repair within seven days, such as parts needing to be ordered. The intention was not to imply any length of time is permissible; taken as a whole document, the intention is clearly that exceeding seven days is permissible, in specific circumstances but it is not advocated as a general practice.

The absence of a cut off or maximum period was meant to reflect that whilst a resource (crews to do the work) issue is entirely within the contractors gift, a materials one will not always be, and to choose a random, arbitrary cap seemed illogical.

Generally we do not impose temporary speed limit reductions for barrier damage, except in exceptional circumstances. Barrier damage is usually repaired quickly, often overnight and under a lane 3 closure. Implementing a temporary speed limit is a lengthy process and governed by the temporary traffic regulation Order process. It is generally only applied for contraflow or narrow lane running schemes.

Outside of the situations in which AMM129 is the guidance normally applied, service providers use the DMRB standard to inform risk assessments on how to decide what to do (i.e. for life expired barrier).

We would be happy to look into any issue that you may have in relation to a specific section of our road network. If you could let me know where the problem is, I can request additional information from the team responsible.

If you are unhappy with the way we have handled your request you may ask for an internal review. 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

If you have any queries about this letter, please contact me. Please remember to quote reference number FOI 744,240 in any future communications.

Yours sincerely

Email: Ops_dst@highwaysengland.co.uk