

Motorists Reminded to Respect Road Closures

Motorists were today reminded of the importance of respecting closures put in place to protect emergency workers and other road users on motorways and major A-roads

It comes after a driver who ignored a road block on the M42 put in place by Highways England Traffic Officers following a fatal road traffic collision was banned from driving.

Carl Phillip Bloom dodged the road closure between junctions 2 and 1 of the southbound M42 on 20 January last year by driving his white Mercedes van around cones via the hard shoulder.

Magistrates in Kidderminster heard that Highways England Traffic Officer Adam Strang had put in place the rolling road block using his traffic officer vehicle at around midday following a serious incident involving an HGV on the nearby M5.

This safety alert has been prepared by the RSTA. Completed forms for adding to the RSTA website should be submitted to Kathy@rsta-uk.org further information regarding this safety alert please email Kathy or phone 01902 824 325

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He used the vehicle, which had its lights flashing and a message board displaying 'do not pass', to bring traffic to a halt and then placed five cones across the carriageway and hard shoulder, indicating no vehicles should progress further.

Further up the carriageway colleague, Traffic Officer Jonathan Treadwell, was putting in place measures to direct traffic off the motorway at junction 1, while emergency services dealt with the incident.

The traffic had been stationary for over a minute when Bloom drove onto the hard shoulder and around the cones, heading down the carriageway towards the exit. His van and two other vehicles were seen leaving the motorway by Mr Treadwell as he was closing the carriageway and Bloom's registration number was passed to police.

Bloom, aged 45, of Peel Street, Kidderminster, Worcestershire, had denied driving on a motorway hard shoulder and failing to stop when requested by Highways England Traffic Officers but was convicted in his absence following a trial at Kidderminster Magistrates Court.

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He was disqualified from driving for six months, fined £880 and ordered to pay £620 costs and a £44 victim surcharge. He also had three penalty points added to his licence.

Richard Leonard, Head of Road Safety at Highways England, said:

“We hope this case sends out an important message because those who ignore road closures put other people’s safety in jeopardy and this was clearly the case here for our traffic officers.

“Any decision to close the motorway is not taken lightly, but when this happens, drivers must obey the closure. It’s there for the safety of everyone on the road – people in difficulty, recovery and emergency services helping them, and all other road users besides.

“Highways England Traffic Officers play an important role in managing our network as well as providing vital support to road users and they are entitled to carry out their work without being exposed to this kind of dangerous behaviour.”

Under the Traffic Management Act 2004, Traffic Officers have the power to:

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- stop and direct traffic
- close lanes and carriageways
- manage traffic

Drivers must obey directions from a uniformed Traffic Officer. Failure to do so is an offence and carries a fine of up to £1,000 along with possible driving licence endorsement or disqualification.

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