



Institute of Advanced Motorists

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Fact Sheet 11/001

PERSONAL SAFETY ON THE ROAD

Motorists today face more risks than ever on the road and women can feel particularly vulnerable. If you break down when driving alone these guidelines from the Institute of Advanced Motorists (IAM) may help to make it a less unnerving experience.

- **Ensure somebody knows your route and arrival time.**
Plan your journey properly and let somebody know your route and when you expect to arrive. If that person is not at your destination, don't forget to let them know that you have arrived safely.
- **Do not panic if you break down.**
If you can, stop where there are lights, houses, people and a telephone. This clearly would not be possible if your car fails completely or in extremely remote areas.
- **Immediately call for assistance.**
Mobile phones, used properly in this situation, can be invaluable. When you call, stress to the motoring organisation or police if you are a woman alone. They are all geared to giving you priority attention.
- **Verify offers of help are genuine.**
If somebody offers help, ask for assistance through a closed window unless you are SURE they are trustworthy (e.g. Police, AA or RAC patrols). Make a note of car numbers of others who offer to help or appear to be showing an interest in you. If you are on the telephone give the car registrations and let the driver know you have done so.
- **Motorways need extra caution.**
Pull well over to the left of the hard shoulder with your wheels pointing in to the bank and, if possible, stop by an emergency telephone. Telephones are every mile, so the furthest you may have to walk is a half mile. You will be safer walking back in the direction from which you came and you can watch out for danger from approaching vehicles. Every 100 yards there is a post with an arrow pointing to the nearest telephone. After phoning return to your car, glancing behind you to keep an eye on traffic movements and if circumstances allow, remain outside the car on the verge (out of sight of oncoming traffic). If you do remain in the car, lock the doors and sit in the front passenger seat to create the impression that you are not alone. Females in this situation can wear a baseball cap to further minimize unwanted attention. Remember, there is a greater chance of being injured or killed in an accident with your car parked on the hard shoulder than of being personally attacked. At night, to extend battery life, use your hazard warning lights and sidelights only.
- **Keep valuables out of sight.**
You will feel safer if your car doors are locked and the windows closed when driving in slow-moving urban traffic, but unlocked if you are making progress. This will ease your exit in the event of an accident. Keep lap top computers, handbags and shopping bags out of sight and avoid prolonged eye contact with other road users.