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900 killed or injured as hard shoulders vanish from motorways

Graeme Paton, Transport Correspondent

September 27 2019, 12:01am, The Times



The number of people killed on Britain's motorways was up 8 per cent in 12 months
ANDREW MATTHEWS/PA



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The number of people killed or seriously injured on motorways is at its highest level this decade, prompting further concern over the programme to remove hard shoulders.

Across Britain, 910 people were killed or suffered serious injury on motorways last year, Department for [Transport](#) figures show.

This was up 8 per cent in 12 months and the highest annual total in the period since 2010. The rise runs counter to a long-

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were killed or badly hurt in crashes. The figure was up by 7 per cent in 12 months and represented a rise of 11 per cent compared with the start of the decade.

The smart motorway programme has been introduced on large parts of the M25, M1, M6, M62, M4 and M3. Further stretches will follow. In place of the hard shoulder, emergency lay-bys are installed up to 1.5 miles apart and a red X sign is put on overhead gantries to warn motorists about accidents or breakdowns ahead.

Motoring groups have said that the removal of the hard shoulder leaves drivers who break down exposed. Four people have died on one smart motorway stretch of the M1 in ten months.

Yesterday [Highways England](#), the government-owned company, insisted that separate analysis showed smart motorways were “as safe as our wider motorway network”.

However, Richard Leonard, its head of road safety, said: “Our aim is to provide a network where no one is killed or injured while travelling on our roads; [yesterday’s] report indicates there is still much more that needs to be done. The numbers are very concerning and while over the last 15 years safety has

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Edmund King, president of the AA, said that the organisation was “still adamant that smart motorways would be safer with double the number of lay-bys”. He said polling carried out by AA revealed that only a third of drivers felt relaxed about driving on a smart motorway with lay-bys every 1.5 miles.

“This level of confidence has fallen from 40 per cent the previous year,” Mr King said. “Almost one in ten are extremely nervous or anxious on these motorways.”

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