

M25 motorway deaths might have been avoided

On Saturday 24th March, a lorry travelling anti clockwise on the M25 near junction 28, crashed through the central reservation and collided with five motorcycles and three cars travelling clockwise on the opposite carriageway.

Two motorcyclists were pronounced dead at the scene, several others taken to hospital for serious injuries and the motorway was closed for most of the day.

The deaths of the two men and the massive queues that ensued were avoidable had a new life saving central reservation been installed.

There are a shocking number of crossover incidents such as this every year; accidents that Britpave believes could be avoided if outdated steel barriers are replaced by the stronger and safer slipformed concrete barrier. "The superior strength of concrete step barriers can help prevent crossover accidents. On the sections of UK roads where concrete barriers have been installed no vehicles have ever crashed through them", said David Jones, Director of Britpave.

The concrete step barrier helps prevent crossover accidents by successfully restraining vehicles and stopping them from crossing over into the path of oncoming traffic. The barrier is designed to be repair and maintenance free for the entirety of its 50-year life. By contrast, steel barriers, with a design life of only 20 years, would not only have to be replaced three times during this period but would also need regular tensioning and maintenance. Furthermore, unlike steel barriers, which usually need to be replaced following vehicular impact, concrete barriers are robust enough to withstand vehicular impact. Lane closures for the ongoing replacement and maintenance of steel barriers are a major factor in the delays and congestion that is experienced on roads.

Recognising their benefits, in January 2005 the Highways Agency announced an initiative to install high containment concrete barriers on all of England's motorways. Had the concrete barrier been installed on this section of the motorway, the chances of the lorry staying on the anti clockwise carriageway would have been greater and the two motorcyclists might still be alive.

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Notes

- Britpave, the British In-situ Concrete Paving Association, was formed in 1991 to promote better and greater use of concrete. For further information please contact David Jones, Director, on 01276 33160 or at djones@britpave.org
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The Highway Agency's decision to install concrete barrier on its motorways was based on the following benefits:

- Its higher containment level of 13 tonnes, compared to the steel barrier of 1.5 tonnes, means that crossover incidents will be virtually eliminated

- In the event of an accident, the concrete step barrier is specifically designed to enable the vehicle to be directed along the face of the barrier in the direction of the traffic flow
- The smooth angle of the barrier face will cause fewer and less serious injuries to motorcyclists than steel barriers with protruding bolts, nuts and joints that can and do inflict severe damage
- It has a 50 year life span and is maintenance free, which means no lane closures and therefore no congestion and delays
- As it is maintenance free, no longer will barrier repair teams risk their lives to carry out work on site in dangerous conditions