

M27 SAFER THANKS TO NEW CONCRETE BARRIER INSTALLATION

The M27 in Hampshire will soon become safer thanks to the installation of a new innovative central barrier.

Work is due to commence in April 2008 to install concrete step barrier on the central reservation between junctions 3 and 4 as part of a motorway widening and improvement scheme. Concrete step barriers offer superior vehicle restraint and long-term performance compared to steel barriers which often fail to prevent vehicles crashing through the central reservation and driving into the path of oncoming vehicles.

In Britain there are some 400 such 'crossover accidents' every year; accidents that Britpave, the transport infrastructure group, believes could be avoided if outdated steel barriers are replaced by the stronger and safer slipformed concrete barrier.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 helps to prevent crossover accidents. On the sections of UK motorways where concrete barriers have been installed no vehicles have ever crashed through them", said David Jones, Director of Britpave.

The concrete 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 Britain's roads.

A report from the Transport Research Laboratory concluded that between 1st January 2002 and 31st December 2002, there were 70% fewer reported incidents on the M25 where vehicles collided with concrete barrier as opposed to steel barriers. This is an excellent indication of how robust the concrete barrier is and its success level at keeping traffic moving, as it is specifically designed to enable the vehicle to be directed along the face of the barrier in the direction of the traffic flow.

In 2005, the Highways Agency announced an initiative to install high containment concrete barriers on all of England's motorways. "The installation of concrete step barriers on this section of motorway is good news for drivers using the M27 through Hampshire. It will mean increased safety and minimal traffic disruption", said Jones.

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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