



# Institute of Advanced Motorists

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## Fact Sheet 18/001

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### EMERGENCY VEHICLES

Deciding on what to do when you hear an emergency vehicle approaching can be a dilemma. Do you stay where you are and block the progress of an emergency vehicle, or move into a position that could prove dangerous to you or to other road users? Unfortunately, many drivers over-react to emergency service vehicles travelling on “blues and twos” (blue lights and two-tone horns). This advice has been prepared by the IAM to help drivers and riders share the road with emergency vehicles.

- **Don't panic and just brake.** It's natural to want to react. But instinctively putting your brakes on immediately in front of an emergency vehicle is of little use. This jeopardises other road users, and sometimes slow the progress of the emergency vehicle.
- **Think** about where you are on the road. You should deal with the problem in the same way that you deal with any other potentially hazardous driving situation. Observe and plan: what is the safest option available to you? You must sacrifice everything for safety, but never sacrifice safety for anything – not even facilitating the progress of the emergency service vehicle. Mounting the kerb, for example, could put pedestrians or cyclists at risk. But this misguided attempt to create a bit of room could be of limited use to a large vehicle such as a fire engine.
- **If you are moving** it may well be that you can continue at a reasonable pace and the emergency vehicle can follow you out of a pocket of congestion (such as a blocked one way system). In that scenario, attempting to pull over too soon, or slow down, might just cause a needless obstruction and so hamper the progress of the emergency vehicle.
- **Get out of the way** as soon as you can do so **in safety**. Indicate your intentions clearly. Don't pull in opposite other obstructions, such as centre bollards. If you are thinking about pulling over across a junction or outside a school or factory, you may be unwittingly be stopping the emergency vehicle reaching its destination.