QUICK GUIDE: HIGHWAY EMERGENCIES

The Emergency Response Service operates 24/7 and ensure that high-risk safety issues are dealt with or made safe as quickly as possible

Suffolk Highways
your roads, our business

follow us **@suff_highways**

report a fault **highwaysreporting.suffolk.gov.uk**

what's happening in my area? **https://one.network**

July 2022

Highway Emergencies

Suffolk County Council operates an Emergency Response Service (ERS) which is available 24 hours/365 days a year (including all bank holidays) to respond and 'make safe' highway emergencies. The majority of highway emergencies are reported to us by the Police, often requiring us to put in place a diversion route to enable them to work safely following a road traffic collision or incident affecting the highway.

What are highway emergencies?

Highway emergencies are faults, defects or events that require an **immediate** response because of the high risk of:

- death or injury to highway users, including members of the public, the emergency services and highway employees;
- significant damage to the highway asset (eg road, footway or highway structure);
- loss or significant reduction to the effective operation of the highway network.

Highway emergencies can result from:

- a Road Traffic Collision (RTC) or other incident that gives rise to the involvement of the emergency services; and
- a fire, flood, severe weather event or another type of incident that poses an immediate risk to public safety or the effective operation of the highway network.
- significant failure of the highway infrastructure

We also work alongside other agencies to deal with major events occurring over several days, often associated with climatic conditions e.g. coastal oil protection, natural and civil emergencies, wide scale flooding or storm damage.

What we do

When we are notified of a potential highway emergency, we take details of what highway asset is affected and the emergency condition, as shown in the table below. Staff go to site and take action to make the highway safe – this could be by placing barriers or cones around a defect to stop people going near it, and in some cases, closing roads and thereafter installing diversions.

Once an area is 'made safe' an assessment of the incident is carried out shortly after and any required follow-up repairs are actioned.

Highway Asset Affected	Emergency Condition
Road collapse (sink hole)	The size of hole in the highway is significant (e.g. road collapse).
Footway trips and Footway potholes	Potholes of >200mm in diameter and >40mm in depth **or** trips > 40mm in height in busy pedestrianised areas (e.g. busy shopping and business areas)
Street lighting/lit traffic signs	Dangerously leaning, column, electrical compartment door open or missing, electrical wires exposed. The lighting unit or the bracket arm (or both) of the column hanging.

Lit traffic bollards	Bollard damaged **and** base light has wires exposed
Road signs and other street furniture, including unlit bollards	Damaged so they are a direct danger or obstruction to the travelling public, (e.g. bent into the path of vehicles)
Traffic signals	All lights out on identified 'Priority Junctions'. Dangerously leaning signal poles, traffic signal heads hanging down, electrical wires exposed. Signal head has been hit/damaged/vandalised and pointing in the wrong direction causing confusion for drivers. *Problems with temporary traffic signals should be reported to the company who installed them – contact details should be attached to the control box on site or use One.Network website.*
Debris, spillages and obstructions on the highway	Environmentally hazardous spillages include petrol, diesel, oil, other vehicle fluids, chemicals, bodily fluids, and sewage on the road. Excessive amounts of mud and or stones on the road. Any large obstacles preventing traffic passing including, large dead animals, (for example cattle/deer/horse)
Highway structures collapse	Damaged or collapsed structure obstructing the path or road and causing a danger, (e.g. bridge, culvert, wall, fences, scaffolds, hoarding).
Trees and vegetation	Fallen tree or branch blocking part or all the road or path. Large branch hanging down with the potential to fall on passing road users.
Flooding	Extensive flooding resulting in road being impassable or flooding of adjacent dwelling(s). This does not include "flash flooding" where the road may be covered in water immediately after very heavy rain but will be clear within an hour of the rain stopping **This also does not include burst pipes or water mains, which you need to contact** Anglian Water
Manole covers and gratings in the highway	Manholes covers or gratings missing, broken, or collapsed so they are a direct danger or obstruction to the travelling public.
Overhead cabling	Fallen across the highway, dangerously hanging down.
Fencing and safety barriers	Only damaged safety fences on "A" roads and leading up to bridges should be reported as emergencies. This includes broken or sharp edges sticking into the road or pavement In most cases fencing is owned by the adjacent property owner and should not be reported to us unless the damage blocks the highway
Roadworks	Left unguarded or unprotected presenting a potential danger to the public

Adjacent buildings/structures to the highway	Building collapse or elements at risk of falling off onto the highway
	The road or the footpath will be closed to safeguard all users, work to make safe the building(s) is the responsibility of the owner(s)

What we don't do

- Work on the highway if by doing so it would put our staff at risk – an example would be where there are overhead cables tangled in the branches of a tree which we would not touch until other organisations such as BT (telecommunications cables) or UK Power Networks (electricity cables) have been to site to either remove or make them safe
- Remove tree trunks or branches from site – we will remove them from the road then stack these on the highway verge.
- Undertake permanent repairs to the highway assets, e.g. to replace a knocked down bollard. The main aim of an immediate response is to make the area safe. Permanent repairs or replacements will be ordered as appropriate and undertaken on a planned basis.
- Repair all other highway defects that would be repaired during normal working hours as covered by our Highway Maintenance Operational Plan (HMOP) e.g.: potholes, minor flooding, missing road signs etc

What you can do

If you find a highways problem that poses an **immediate danger to the public**, please telephone

0345 6066171

This number is available to use at any time day or night, every day of the year.

This ensures that your report is taken by a person who will immediately inform the highways team for action. Reports by any other means will not be responded to as quickly and dangerous occurrences may go unattended for longer than the 2 hours the highways service endeavours to attend.

Please use our highways reporting tool to tell us about other highway issues which may be urgent, but which do not require an immediate response.

When you **report** an emergency give:

- a description of the emergency (size or extent of problem, when it happened and the current situation)
- any cables involved and any knowledge of whether they are electrical or phone wires;
- for oil spillages, whether a small, localised area is affected or whether spillage affects a long length of a road (this will determine whether 2 men with brooms are dispatched to deal with the problem or whether a mechanical sweeper is required)
- good details of the location (e.g. outside No. 5, The Street, "somewhere town", or road number and location)
- an indication of how busy/important the road is (eg a road serving a hospital or on a bus route or a cul-de-sac with a few properties
- your name and telephone number so we can contact you if we need more information

NB the better the quality of information will enable the highways service to fully assess the incident and be able to instigate the correct highways crews to attend at the right time.