

IMPROVING POST-COLLISION RESPONSE AND EMERGENCY CARE IN EUROPE

Case Study: Emergency Services Driving Standard

ETSC'S REVIVE PROJECT MAPS GOOD PRACTICES IN EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES (EMS) AND FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICES (FRS) ACROSS THE EU28 AND RAISES THE PROFILE OF BOTH EMS AND FRS ON THE NATIONAL AND EUROPEAN POLITICAL AGENDAS.

The REVIVE project aims at improving post-collision response and emergency care provided by EMS and FRS in order to mitigate the consequences of road collisions. It contributes to promoting the need for a coordinated, EU-wide action on tackling serious road traffic injuries.

This case study looks at the Irish Emergency Services Driving Standard.

FACTFILE

Emergency Services Driving Standard

- ✓ A common driving standard for all emergency services drivers
- ✓ Teaches drivers how to drive in a way that is safe for drivers, passengers, patients and other road users
- ✓ Includes training on responding in emergency situations and how to mitigate the specific risks faced by emergency services drivers



WHAT IS THE EMERGENCY SERVICES DRIVING STANDARD?

The Emergency Services Driving Standard (ESDS) of Ireland is a common driving standard for emergency services drivers of all branches. It aims to improve drivers' awareness of the need to use the road in a way that is safe for them, for other road users and for those that they carry as passengers/patients.

It was devised in 2014 by the Irish Road Safety Authority, in conjunction with the other principal emergency services and related organisations in Ireland and is now the agreed and recognised national standard for Emergency Service Drivers in Ireland.

It also looks at aspects of driving such as attitude to risk and the ability to take suitable precautions and to choose routes and ways of driving that reduce the risk of collisions. Equally important is ensuring that emergency services drivers know the legal requirements and regulations regarding their work and how they affect them.

ISN'T TRAINING ALREADY PROVIDED FOR EMERGENCY SERVICES DRIVERS?

Most countries have training requirements and codes of practice for emergency services drivers, although the amount of training received can vary considerably. Training includes how to respond to various traffic situations and specific details on which drivers are allowed to drive over the speed limit and drive with lights/sirens. This training can be provided by various agencies and accreditation services.

For example, in Germany specialised training for drivers of emergency vehicles is made available by the German Road Safety Council, in cooperation with insurance and work-related road safety organisations.¹ Modern technology even allows for advanced simulator training which can replicate real-world traffic situations.²

Some of this training will undoubtedly overlap with the material included in the Irish ESDS. However, the point of the ESDS is to provide a higher level and more in-depth standard of training for drivers of all emergency organisations, for blue-light services and others.

In most emergency service organisations, only some drivers are permitted to drive using sirens and lights and at higher speeds. In some cases and at certain times, the number of authorised drivers can be very small. Therefore, it's important that those few who are allowed and available to do so are trained to the highest possible standard.

The ESDS reflects the need for higher standards of driving and aims to develop and sustain a spirit of cooperation, caution and courtesy in emergency service drivers.

WHY IS TRAINING FOR EMERGENCY SERVICES DRIVERS SO IMPORTANT?

Emergency services drivers carry out an inherently stressful task and are under considerable pressure to not only arrive at the scene of a collision promptly, but then provide potentially life-saving care and/or extrication when they arrive.

While driving to the scene of a collision, they and their colleagues in the vehicle are likely to be processing information about the collision, working out what they will need to do once they arrive and ensuring their equipment is prepared. At the same time, they are having to carry out driving tasks over and above those expected of a regular driver.

Therefore, it is important that the drivers themselves are given the information and training they need to drive safely under pressure. Emergency services drivers are responsible not just for their own lives but also those of their passengers and patients, who may be severely injured. It is important that they are kept safe and comfortable during the journey.

Similarly, nearly all journeys made as part of a post-collision response use public roads. Ensuring that the general public is also kept safe while the emergency services carry out their business is equally important, especially as these drivers may be driving at higher speeds and trying to make rapid progress through traffic.

WHAT IS INCLUDED IN THE STANDARD?

The standard is divided into three levels, designed to fit the different needs and requirements of the individual organisations who use it. Level 1 is the entry level and sets out the basic training, learning and assessment that is needed. Level 2 provides more detail on the training and assessment involved and also includes the skills of 'roadcraft'.³

¹ <https://www.dvr.de/praevention/sht-shp/einsatzfahrzeuge/>

² <https://www.dvr.de/praevention/seminare/einsatzwagen/>

³ See also Roadcraft: The Police Driver's Handbook and Motorcycle Roadcraft: The Police Rider's Handbook, www.roadcraft.co.uk

WHAT IS 'ROADCRAFT'?



Roadcraft is a recognised system of vehicle control used in the training of emergency service drivers which employs a methodical and systematic approach to driving.

The aim of this is to give drivers more time to react in complex situations on the road such as when a hazard appears and requires a manoeuvre.

Most relevant for the REVIVE project is Level 3, as this is the material that applies only to services who are legally allowed to drive using lights and sirens in an emergency response situation (e.g. police, ambulance and fire). These are the services which will be carrying out the more hazardous driving, such as exceeding statutory speed limits, on a regular basis.

Level 3 includes three modules aimed at the drivers of blue-light emergency services.

1. **‘Managing emergency response’** includes both the legal requirements and exemptions of emergency response drivers and the importance of being physically and psychologically prepared to drive in such a situation. An important aspect of this is the evaluation of whether or not an emergency response is the correct, or appropriate course of action to take.
2. **‘Driving standards and vehicle assessment’** covers how drivers can keep their concentration while driving in an emergency response situation and also keep to the ESDS standard of driving while using warning equipment (lights and siren) in an emergency.
3. **‘Emergency response driving’** centres on the practicalities of driving in an emergency situation, such as making good progress in traffic with warning equipment and how best to use that equipment when interacting with different road users (e.g. pedestrians, cyclists, other drivers), and different traffic conditions (light, heavy, stationary).

Knowing how to maintain a calm and professional approach and being able to factor in the effects of psychological pressures and potentially stressful or anger-inducing situations are all included in the Standard. Equally important is that drivers understand that safety and driving standards should not be sacrificed in order to make quicker progress when travelling to a collision site.

WHO PROVIDES THE TRAINING AND HOW ARE DRIVERS ASSESSED?

In Ireland, training is provided by a network of ESDS trainers around the country. Some focus solely on ESDS training whereas others are also regular Approved Driving Instructors.

The assessment and certification process includes both theoretical and practical tests and is conducted by approved ESDS assessors. However, only drivers eligible for the legal exemptions covered in Level 3 are permitted to undertake the Level 3 training and assessment.



The ESDS applies to vehicle categories B, BE, C1, C, CE, C1E, D1, D, DE, D1E, and assessments differ depending on the vehicle type in question.

Driver Recertification is needed for an individual driver to maintain their ESDS Certification in a certain ESDS level and vehicle category. The ESDS Driver Certificate lasts for five years, at which point the driver will have to complete the practical assessment once again. This helps to ensure driver knowledge is regularly refreshed and updated.

FIND OUT MORE

To read more about the Emergency Services Driving Standard, visit the Road Safety Authority website: <http://www.rsa.ie/esds>

To read more about the REVIVE Project, visit the ETSC website: www.etsc.eu/revive