



Changes to strategic road network policing and the effect on the haulier

In 2008 two major changes happened in the UK

- The Secretary of State for Transport's decided to transfer various tasks associated with management of the strategic road transport network from the Police to the Highways Agency. One of these tasks includes the recovery of stricken vehicles.
- Statutory charges collected on behalf of Police Authorities for the recovery of vehicles were altered dramatically.

Before 2008, policing of the strategic road network was dealt with by the Police. However, for many years the number of available motorway Police units has been diminishing, which in turn means that it was always difficult for the Police to meet targets such as:

“Any vehicle on the motorway network that has been involved in a collision that has visible damage will be removed within 30 minutes”

As the number of available Police units has decreased over the years often the vehicle would be parked on the hard shoulder for quite some time before the Police were even aware of the incident. From the haulier's point of view this was not always a bad thing as it bought the haulier precious time to arrange their own vehicle recovery, instead of facing the trauma of having their vehicle recovered through the Police 'rota garage' system.

It is estimated that there are 40% – 50% more Highways Officers on the Motorway Network in the UK than there were Motorway Police Officers before 2008. As well as this significant rise in manpower, the Highways Officers have fewer responsibilities than their Police Officer counterparts ever had. This means that the first knock on effect to the haulier is that in the event of a breakdown or RTC involving a haulier's vehicle, there is a high likelihood that there will be a Highways Officer on scene much more quickly than before, which gives the haulier significantly less time to take action to keep control of the situation and their costs.

In addition to this, the Highways Agency also now has access to all the cameras on the motorway network, and are able to monitor the roadways, and respond even more quickly. In terms of the Government's transport policy, this is a good thing. For the owner of a vehicle that requires recovery, sometimes it is not so good.

With the recent change in statutory fees for vehicle recovery, it is becoming apparent that hauliers are now facing statutory fees for recovered vehicles, even when the incident does not appear to be too major or difficult. See our case studies (enclosed) for examples of this.

“Hauliers can decrease costs and increase control by employing an quick response nationwide recovery deployment system, and effectively bypassing the Police / Highways rota recovery system.”