

Stranded Passengers



Introduction

There is that sinking feeling of instant annoyance and despair when you see the queue of traffic ahead and slowly come to a standstill on the road. In almost no time most of us quickly become frustrated and even angry at the situation, simply because the last place we want to be at that time is stuck in a queue. Let's be honest, we've all been there but the key thing is most of us get moving quite quickly and generally the worst cases tend to only last a few hours. But what happens if it is longer than that?

Interesting Facts

- Nearly 300 billion traffic miles were estimated to be travelled in the UK in 2021
- The UK economy lost approximately £6.9bn in 2019 due to traffic jams



What is it?

Put simply stranded passengers is exactly what it says on the tin. It is basically when people get stranded on the road or any other transport network (e.g., railway).

There is no specific time spent stranded on the network, that qualifies you as a stranded passenger. A variety of criteria will be assessed at the time to decide what further measures need to be put in place. These measures may include (but are not limited to), supplying welfare facilities such as food, water and toilets.

As you can imagine supplying facilities to stranded passengers is not a simple task and therefore the main priority is to 'get everyone moving' again as soon as possible.

History

A quick Google Search on traffic jams will bring up countless articles on motorway queues across the UK. However, let's explore something a little different:

Eurotunnel August 2022

Being stranded on the Eurotunnel is frustrating and frightening for many. In August 2022 passengers were evacuated from the train after it broke down beneath the English Channel. This led to the passengers being stuck in the tunnel for around 5 hours while a replacement service was found.

In addition to this, the issues with the trains led to queues at each end of the tunnels with passengers booked on other services then delayed.

When passengers are stranded it tends to cause ripple effects elsewhere. Just imagine yourself, you've finished work and are on the way home, you get stuck for 4 hours, you're very late to pick up the children from school, you need to arrange for someone else to do it, you then miss dinner and you didn't pack any extra food for the journey and then you miss the cinema trip you planned for the family as you're so late home. That might all sound trivial but most of us use transport as a means to get somewhere – rather than being a pleasurable activity it's those ripple effects that cause the most issues.



What are we doing about it in the LRF?

Dealing with stranded passengers is an issue we consider as very important in the LRF, primarily as we have several key arterials roads (e.g., the M4 and A303) and main line rail routes running through the county (Bristol to London - Paddington). Our priority is always the welfare of people. We have a specific stranded passenger's plan alongside set procedures for an evacuation of Box Tunnel, which is a 1.8-mile-long railway tunnel between the village of Box and the town of Corsham on the main London Paddington line. Both our plans and procedures are regularly reviewed and tested with site visits to key locations such as Box Tunnel undertaken periodically in conjunction with Network Rail.



What can you do?

There's not a lot you can do to reduce the chances of this happening, other than perhaps opting for walking or cycling everywhere! However, what you can do is plan ahead and make sure your car has a few essentials to keep you going. Keeping a blanket and a warm jumper in the car as a contingency is a good idea, alongside always trying to keep a few dry long-lasting snacks and a bottle of water handy.

