

REDUCING ROAD CHECK RISKS

Prioritise visibility, location, gradual speed reduction and safe distance, says expert

NOR AIN MOHAMED RADHI
KUALA LUMPUR
ainradhi@nst.com.my

AS enforcement operations remain vital for road safety, greater precautions are needed to reduce risks during roadside checks.

Universiti Putra Malaysia's Professor Dr Kulanthayan K.C. Mani said such checks should prioritise four key factors: visibility, location, gradual speed reduction and a safe distance between vehicles.

"Checks must be conducted in locations that are safe for enforcement officers and clearly visible to approaching vehicles. The speed of oncoming traffic should be reduced gradually, not abruptly, to allow road users to react early and lower the risk of crashes," he told the *New Straits Times*.

He was asked to comment on a recent case where a motorcyclist rammed into a policeman conducting checks on a vehicle on the emergency lane of the North-South Expressway.

The motorcyclist was killed while the policeman was seriously injured.

Kulanthayan, a professor in the Community Health Department at UPM's Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, said unplanned roadside checks were still important.

"These are carried out when enforcement officers suspect a vehicle is unsafe or notice unusual driver behaviour. The aim is to protect both the driver or rider and other road users," he said.

However, he acknowledged that collision risks, especially on highways with limited space, could not be eliminated.

"On highways, checks are often limited to the emergency lane. Using this lane for enforcement increases the risk of collisions, particularly with motorcycles."

He added that early alerts, high visibility, proper signage and warning signals were crucial to give drivers time to respond.

He also reminded road users to keep emergency lanes clear, as

they were strictly for emergencies and emergency vehicles.

Road Safety Expert Association (RSEA) founder and adviser Jamil Manan Supri said routine checks on emergency lanes were inherently unsafe.

He said enforcement should be relocated to controlled zones or conducted only with robust traffic management measures.

"Emergency lanes serve as forgiving zones for vehicle breakdowns, medical emergencies, or evasive manoeuvres, not for routine enforcement activity."

"Using these lanes for police inspections introduces significant risk due to high-speed traffic, limited lateral protection and low driver expectancy, particularly for motorcycles.

"Personnel standing outside vehicles in this environment are among the highest-risk roadside workers globally."

Jamil added that emergency lanes must be treated as sterile safety spaces, consistent with the safe system approach, which prioritises minimising exposure to human error in high-speed traffic environments.

The recent incident, he said, should be treated as a system-

level learning opportunity, prompting alignment between enforcement practices and contemporary highway safety principles.

"Incidents like this are best understood not purely as operational mistakes, but as signals that procedures have not fully adapted to modern traffic risk levels."

Jamil said RSEA recommended that routine enforcement should be relocated to controlled, low-risk zones such as toll plazas, rest areas or designated lay-bys, with main carriageway stops limited to immediate safety threats or crash response.

Any unavoidable roadside stop must be protected by an upstream shadow vehicle equipped with high-intensity lights, warning devices and cones to create a physical safety buffer, with configurations based on traffic speed and visibility.



Dr Kulanthayan
K.C. Mani