Government of South Australia
Department for Transport, Energy and Infrastructure

Help Phones

Operational Instruction 6.9

Help Phones - 6.9

AMENDMENT RECORD

Version	*Page(s)*	*Date*	*Amendment Description*	*Init*
Ed1/Rev0		01/97	Draft (Prep by S Clark)	SC
Ed1/Rev1		01/04	Signed	
Ver 2	All	22/05/08	Format Changes Only	DW

This document has been prepared by Traffic and Access Standards Section. It has been approved and authorised for use by Department for Transport, Energy and Infrastructure and its authorised agents by:

Manager, Traffic and Access Standards Section

28 / 01 / 2004

For information regarding the interpretation of this document please contact:
Transport Services Division
Telephone: (08) 8343 2289 Facsimile: (08) 8343 2630

For additional copies or to confirm the current status of this document please contact:
Traffic and Access Standards Section Department for Transport, Energy and Infrastructure
Telephone: (08) 8343 2849 Facsimile: (08) 8343 2630
email: david.widdrington@saugov.sa.gov.au

CONTENTS

1. Scope

This Operational Instruction details Transport SA's policy regarding the operation of roadside help phone systems on TSA roads and aims to provide a uniform and consistent approach for the planning and deployment of the phones in South Australia.

2. Background

Help phones provide a ready means of communication for road users to advise of a breakdown, incident or other type of emergency that requires assistance.

Help phones are located along a limited number of South Australia's roads and highways. Some of the locations include the Lonsdale Highway, South-Eastern Freeway, Stuart Highway, Pt Wakefield Road, Eyre Highway and Southern Expressway.

The main benefits of help phones are to reduce the response time for roadside medical emergencies and reduce the delay in getting assistance to broken down vehicles.

Help phones were previously known as emergency telephones but public survey testing has revealed that road users are more likely to use the facility for its intended purpose if the word "HELP" is used instead of "EMERGENCY" (*AS 1742.6 – 2003 Draft*).

3. Defining the Road Environment

3.1 Expressway/Freeway Environments

For the purpose of this operational instruction expressway/freeway environments include roads in built up areas, and freeways and expressways in both urban and rural environments.

Generally expressway/freeway environments are controlled access roads with limited or no pedestrian access.

3.2 Rural and Remote Areas

For the purpose of this operational instruction rural and remote areas are defined by that shown in **Figure 3.1**, which defines the remote area as being the area north of an imaginary line from Ceduna across to Pt Augusta and Peterborough to the New South Wales border. Rural areas exclude townships and other built up areas.

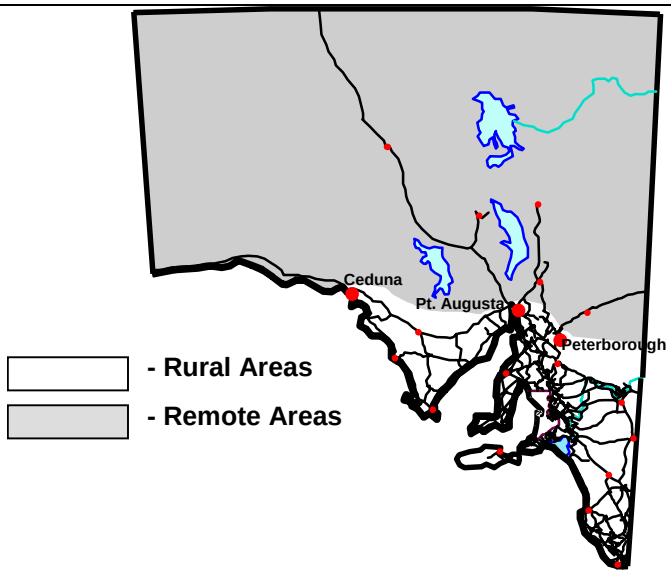


Figure 3.1: Division between rural and remote areas

4. Justification for Help Phones

The aim of help phones is to decrease the time between an incident occurring and the reporting of that incident resulting in the road user receiving earlier attention.

Significant costs are associated with the provision, operation and maintenance of help phones so it is critical that help phones are only installed in areas of real need.

It is also believed that as mobile telephone ownership and usage increase, there is becoming less need for help phones to be installed, particularly in built up areas. But it is important to maintain 'social equity' and ensure that a help phone system is in place where necessary to cater for those without a mobile phone.

4.1 Expressway/Freeway Environments

In expressway/freeway environments it is desirable that the help phones only be installed in areas where pedestrian activity is either prohibited or where pedestrians from disabled vehicles are at a moderate to high risk of being hit by another vehicle.

4.2 Rural and Remote Areas

In rural and remote areas traffic volumes are generally too low to justify the installation of help phones. However, other factors such as isolation of the route from assistance, climate or lack of GSM or CDMA coverage may justify the need for a help phone system.

Help phones may also be considered in known breakdown areas and areas with statistically high crash rates.

5. Location of Help Phones

Help phones should be placed so that they are easily accessible for all road users. Consideration should be given to both the safety and/or isolation of the road user and the effect the disabled vehicle can have on other traffic. The spacing of the help phones will depend on factors such as shoulder width, traffic volume, isolation and accessibility.

Consideration of the following needs to be taken into account when selecting a suitable location for the help phones:

- Adequate clear zone to safely use a telephone
- Provision of a safe stopping area such as a breakdown lane, parking bay or wide shoulder so that broken down or parked vehicles don't become a hazard to other road users
- The help phone should be able to be seen clearly from the road or have a sign indicating its location
- If possible, the help phones should be placed near interchanges or exit ramps to allow both ramp users and main carriageway users to access the help phone
- Topography of the surrounding area
- Location of lighting structures
- Prohibition of pedestrian activity

5.1 Expressway/Freeway Environments

On roads of high speed and high volume, and where pedestrian movements are either prohibited or discouraged, help phones should be installed on both sides of the road to avoid the need for pedestrians to cross the road.

The desirable spacing between help phones along expressways and freeways is 0.5km to 2km and up to 4km for rural freeway environments where there are lower traffic volumes.

In heavily trafficked sections of road with little or no shoulders and areas of high risk to pedestrians such as in tunnels, on bridges and causeways with limited pedestrian access the spacing between each help phone can be reduced to as low as 50-100m.

5.2 Rural Areas

In rural areas help phones can be spaced between townships at regular intervals of 40-100km and should where possible be installed within existing roadside rest areas or point of interest sites such as lookouts and monument sites.

In rural locations help phones are primarily provided for road users to reduce the response time in attending to incidents or medical emergencies, either their own or other road users.

5.3 Remote Areas

Help phones in remote areas can be spaced over much larger distances at any suitable isolated location on the roadside. They are intended to be used by road users, not only to report personal emergencies but also to report incidents of other road users encountered along the route. This earlier reporting may to critical in reducing response time.

6. Site Requirements of Help Phones

Help phones should be identifiable in both day and night conditions and make use of any existing lighting in the area. Help phones should provide light to identify the phone features at night. If there is no lighting present at the site then additional lighting should be provided if possible. Solar powered lighting may be required at some locations.

Help phones should be installed in a safe location, beyond the clear zone (see Operational Instruction 15.3 – Clear Zones). Guardrails should not be installed for the sole purpose of protecting the help phone. If the phone is located adjacent to guard fencing, it should be placed near to the ends of the fencing or at a location where there is a break in the fencing to allow pedestrian access.

Consideration should be given to the needs of disabled and elderly people in determining the position and mounting height of the phone.

Help phones should be placed so that road users do not have their back to oncoming traffic while using the phone.

Help phones should be numbered to assist callers, help phone operators and maintenance staff to identify the phone location.

7. Signs

Road users should be advised by appropriate signs of the existence of help phones. All signs shall carry the symbol S25 – ‘HELP PHONE’.

The symbol should also be used on service signs as detailed in AS 1742.6.

Figure 7.1: S25 – ‘HELP PHONE’

For the positioning of all help phone signs see **Appendix A** and **Appendix B**.

7.1 Expressway/Freeway Environment

7.1.1 Location Sign

The G7-13B 600x600mm sign should be placed at the location of all help phones unless the signs and symbols attached to the help phone unit by the manufacturer are adequate enough as location signs by being of equal size and legibility of that of the G7-13B sign.

Figure 7.2: G7-13B

Location signs shall be installed on the same side of the road as the help phone.

7.1.2 Pedestrian Indicator Signs

To reduce the time pedestrians are exposed to the traffic on freeways and expressways, pedestrian indicator signs should be installed advising pedestrians of the direction and distance to the nearest help phone. These

pedestrian indicator signs should be installed so their face is parallel to the direction of traffic.

In urban areas the pedestrian indicator signs should be spaced at 200m intervals with an arrow directing people to nearest help phone. Pedestrian indicator signs shall be a GE7-8 sign with a GE7-9 distance plate.

Figure 7.3: Pedestrian Indicator Sign with Distance Plate (200m)

Pedestrian indicator signs are to be continued in the forward direction at the same scale and spacing, pointing backwards to the telephone until a point is reached where the next downstream telephone is closer.

7.2 Rural and Remote Areas

7.2.1 Location Sign

Signs shall be placed at the location of all help phones in rural and remote areas and on the same side of the road as the help phone. The sign should be the G7-13B shown in **Figure 7.2**.

7.2.2 Advance Sign

Advance signs indicating the location of an approaching help phone should be used in rural and remote areas and should be placed 400m before the location of the phone. Help phones should be signed from both directions of travel.

Advance signs should be either a G7-1-1A or a G7-2-1A and carry the S25 symbol.

Figure 7.4: G7-1-1A

7.2.3 Pedestrian Indicator Sign

Pedestrian indicator signs are not required for rural and remote areas.

7.2.4 Help Phone Signs at Rest Areas

Where the help phone is located within a roadside rest area then the help phone symbol (S25) shall be included on the rest area signs 400m in advance of the rest area and at the entrance to the rest area.

When the rest area is only signed from one direction then additional advance and location help phone signs shall be installed for traffic approaching from the unsigned direction.

Figure 7.5: Example of a Rest Area Sign with the Help Phone Symbol

7.2.5 Information Signs

Information signs display a map showing locations of existing help phones in relation to townships and other help phones. These signs may be used at the location of the help phones and possibly in the other rest areas along the route.

Information signs must be kept up to date as new help phones are installed or existing phones removed.

Figure 7.6: Example of an Information Sign (TES 8970)

The Statewide Operational Coordination Group should be consulted for assistance in developing a suitable information sign.

8. Operating Requirements

The monitoring station shall be manned 24 hours a day from either a traffic control centre, police station or an emergency service centre.

The help phone system should include the following features:

- Voice to voice communication
- Operator should be able to call the road user back if required
- Operator should be able to transfer calls to police, ambulance, fire or RAA
- Hold facility so the operator can hold calls while answering other calls
- Conference call facilities to allow operator or caller to talk to 2 or more telephones

- Back-up power supply to ensure continuous service during black-outs
- Recording facilities to record calls
- Each help phone should have its own unique phone number

9. Maintenance

The help phone system should be maintained at a high level of efficiency. All phones should be checked on at least a fortnightly basis to ensure they are operational by making a call from the help phone to the monitoring station or by an automatic electronic self-checking system on a weekly basis.

The help phone should also be checked for signs of damage, vandalism and cleanliness.

If a help phone is out of order then the phone and any sign relating to the phone should be covered over leaving only the identification number visible. In Freeway/Expressway environments, a small sign should be left at the site of the out of order phone to direct road users to the nearest help phone or service to the area.

10. Usage Evaluation

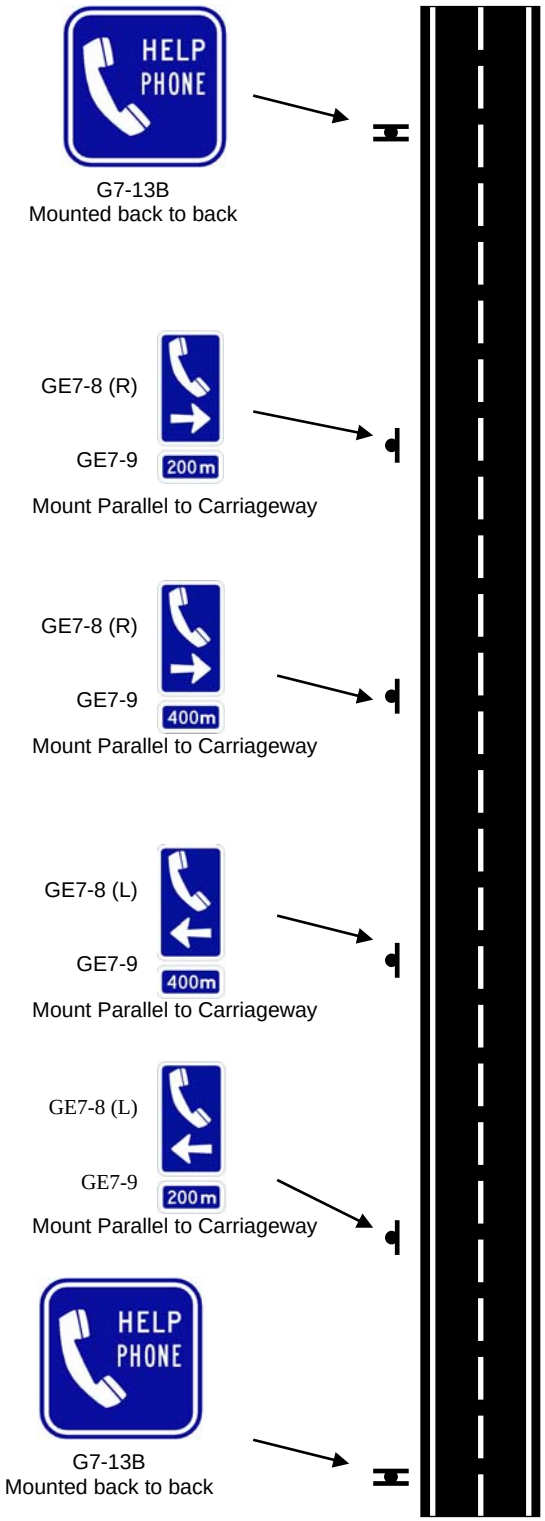
For performance evaluation, records, such as time of receiving the call, location of help phone used, location of incident if not near the phone and the reason for the call shall be kept and maintained. Records should also be kept of operational down times due to breakdowns and maintenance. Electronic and/or hard copy records should be kept detailing all calls from the help phones and what action was required. Records detailing the costs of operation and maintenance of the phones should also be kept.

With other data such as traffic volumes this information allows a review of the operation and of the justification of the system.

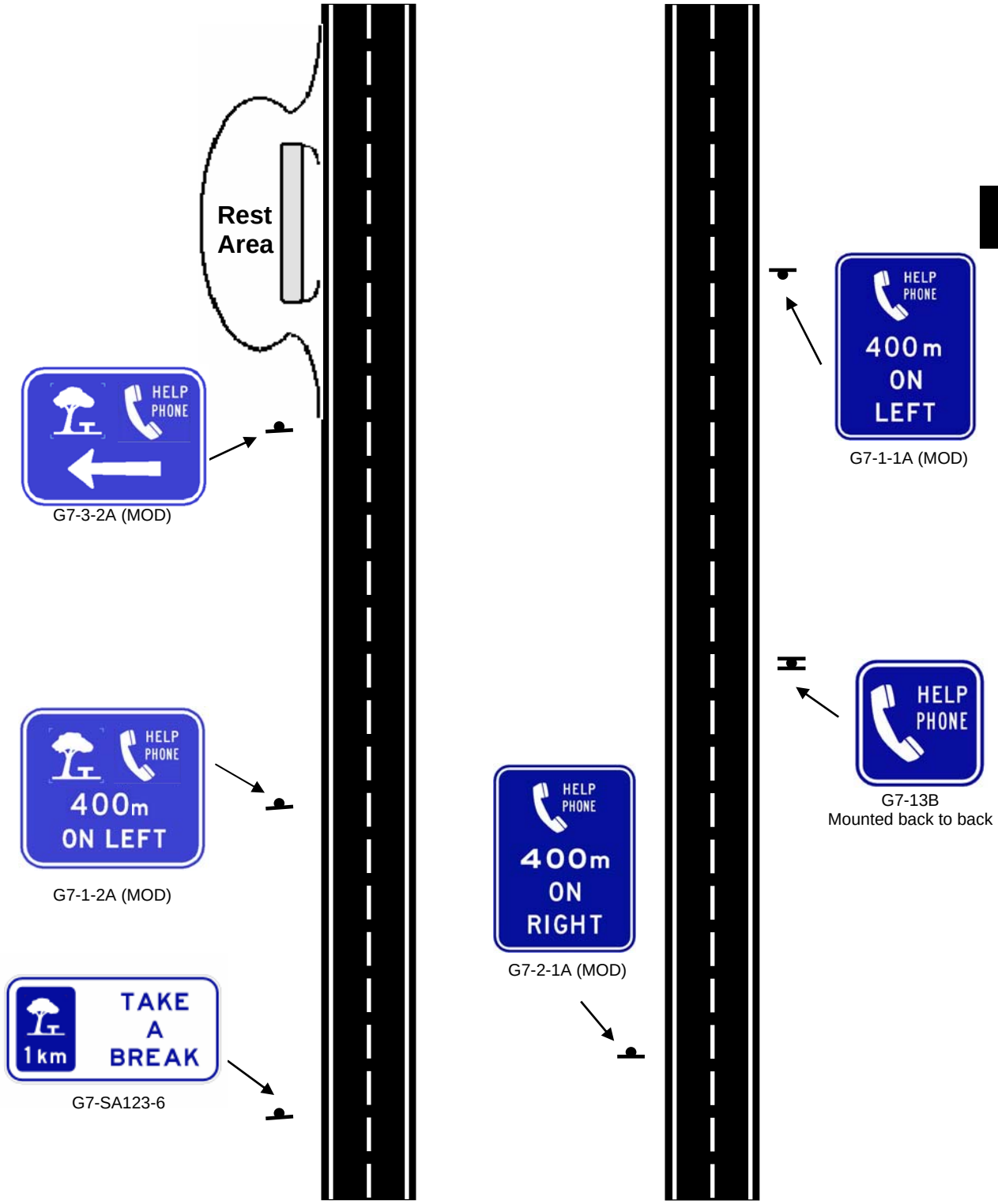
11. References

1. Holstege, Sean, *33% of emergency roadside phones could be yanked out: Not used enough, MTC officials say,* Oakland Tribune, May 10 2002.
2. Heminger, Steve, *Bay Area's plummeting call box use cries out for response,* San Francisco Business Times, June 3 2002.
3. NAASRA, *Guide Policy on the Use and Installation of Emergency Telephones on Freeways and Roads of Limited Access,* August 1980.
4. AS 1742.6 (Draft), *Tourist and Service Signs for Motorists,* 2002.
5. AS 1743, *Road Signs – Specifications*, 2001.
6. TSA, *Operational Instruction 20.3 – Roadside Rest Areas on Rural Roads (Draft),* 2002.
7. TSA, *Operational Instruction 15.3 – Clear Zones*, 1998.

Appendix A Typical Signing for Help Phones for an Expressway/Freeway Environment



Appendix B Typical Signing for Help Phones for Rural/Remote Areas



Within a Rest Area **Typical Rural/Remote**