

Stopping a Race

We continue a series of articles looking at what happens during your track session. This month, we dig into stopping and restarting races – the what, why, and how. The team in Race Control tries to clear incidents with the absolute minimum of disruption to your racing. We do this under a local yellow, if possible; if not, we have to escalate the flag condition.

Full Course Yellow/Safety Car

The operating steward orders a Full Course Yellow (FCY) when a local yellow is not adequate for the incident (for example, when emergency vehicles need to take space on the track) or when drivers fail to respect the local yellow. If an FCY comes out, close up with the cars in front as quickly as you safely can. The entire purpose of the FCY is to gather the field in a single pack behind the Safety Car. This provides the space that the emergency responders need in order to clear the incident.

You may **carefully** pass emergency vehicles while closing up. You may also pass cars that cannot keep the pace if the driver waves you by.

The Safety Car usually dispatches from Pit Out. If you are the leader, slow down a little more as you approach the launch point, in order to give the Safety Car a clear space. If no Safety Car is available, the race leader becomes the Safety Car. You may not pass the Safety Car unless the official in the car waves you by.

When the emergency team has cleared the incident, the Safety Car will shut off its lights and come into the pits. The pack continues single file at Safety Car speed until Start shows the Green. All stations drop their Double Yellows, and racing resumes all around the track. Laps run under FCY count as race laps.

Stopping a Session

Depending on the circumstances, the operating steward may decide to stop the session. There are several ways to do this: Checkered Flag, Black Flag All, or Red Flag.

In practice or qualifying, if the cleanup will take most of the remaining session time, the operating steward will end the session with a Checkered Flag or a Black Flag All plus Checker.

In a race, the operating steward has some options. If the race is more than half-complete, and the conditions suggest it, the steward may simply order a Checkered Flag, ending the race. Since it is over halfway, it is a complete race.

The steward can stop the race with a Black Flag All or a Red Flag (followed by a Black Flag All), depending on the circumstances. You can pass under a Black Flag All, but there is no advantage in doing so.

Restarts

For a restart of a practice or qualifying session, the pit team will simply release cars in the order in which they present themselves.

For a race restart, the GCR specifies two alternatives, at the discretion of the Chief Steward. The first is a complete restart, in original grid order. This is the typical restart following a start line or first-lap accident.

The other option is to restart according to the on-track order at the end of the last completely scored lap. For example, if the race stops on the leader's tenth lap, the restart order would be the on-track order at the end of lap nine.

The grid team will inform you whether the restart will be single-file or two-by-two. On a restart, every pace lap counts as a race lap.

If It Starts Raining

If a race starts in the dry, but it begins to rain, the Chief Steward has the option (not the obligation) of stopping the race with a Black Flag All, and giving participants 15 minutes to change tires, if they so choose. Remember that this is optional, not obligatory, and that the Chief Steward weighs a number of factors in making the decision.

Restarts are as described above.