

CHAPTER 8 — SAFE DRIVING TIPS FOR EVERYDAY DRIVING

USE SEAT BELTS AND CHILD RESTRAINTS

Before you drive, always fasten your seat belt(s) and make sure all your passengers are using seat belts or child restraints. Studies have shown that if you use seat belts, your chances of being hurt or killed in a traffic crash are greatly reduced.

Seat belts should always be worn with the lap belt low and snug across the hips and the shoulder belt across the chest. Shoulder belts should never be placed under the arm or behind the back. If your vehicle has a two-part seat belt system, be sure to wear both the lap and shoulder belt.

Seat belts should be worn even if your vehicle is equipped with air bags. While air bags are good protection against hitting the steering wheel, dashboard, or windshield, they do not protect you if you are hit from the side or rear, or if the vehicle rolls over. An air bag will not keep you behind the wheel in these situations.

An unrestrained or improperly restrained occupant can be seriously injured or killed by a deploying air bag. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration recommends drivers sit with at least 10 inches between the center of their breastbone and the center of the steering wheel. Children 12 and under should always ride properly restrained in a rear seat. Never put a rear-facing infant restraint in the front seat of a vehicle with a front passenger air bag.

If you need more information about child seat safety, contact: Department of Transportation, Highway Safety Division, web site: www.modot.gov; phone: (800) 800-BELT.

SEAT BELTS — IT'S THE LAW

Missouri law requires the operator and front seat occupants of all passenger vehicles to wear a properly adjusted and fastened seat belt. However, ALL passengers accompanying an intermediate driver license holder must be properly restrained.

CHILD PASSENGER RESTRAINT LAW

The law requires children of certain ages, weights and heights to be restrained by a child passenger restraint system, booster seat or safety belt when transported in any motor vehicle other than a public carrier for hire or school bus.

AGE, WEIGHT AND HEIGHT CLASSIFICATIONS

- LESS THAN 4 YEARS OLD — Children less than four years old, regardless of weight, shall be secured in a child passenger restraint system appropriate for that child.



- **LESS THAN 40 POUNDS** — Children weighing less than 40 pounds, regardless of age, shall be secured in a child passenger restraint system appropriate for that child.
- **LESS THAN 8 YEARS OLD or 80 POUNDS OR UNDER 4'9"** — Children at least four years of age but less than eight years of age, who also weigh at least 40 pounds but less than 80 pounds, and are also less than 4'9" tall shall be secured in a child passenger restraint system or booster seat appropriate for that child.
- **CHILDREN AT LEAST 8 YEARS OLD, GREATER THAN 80 POUNDS OR TALLER THAN 4'9"** — Children at least 8 years old, at least 80 pounds or children more than 4'9" tall shall be secured by a vehicle safety belt or booster seat appropriate for that child.

For more information on the Booster Seat Law refer to the Department of Transportation web site: www.modot.org/boosterseats/.

DEFENSIVE DRIVING

To avoid making mistakes, or being in a crash because of someone else's mistake, you must drive defensively. As a defensive driver you should:

- Keep your eyes moving. Notice what is happening ahead of you and on the sides of the road, and check behind you through your mirrors every few seconds. Pay special attention to oncoming vehicles. Many head-on collisions occur by distracted drivers crossing the centerline.
- Expect other drivers to make mistakes, and think what you would do if a mistake does happen. For example, do not assume that a vehicle coming to a stop sign is going to stop. Be ready to react if it does not stop. Never cause a crash on purpose, even if a pedestrian or another vehicle fails to give you the right-of-way.
- Do not rely on traffic signals or signs to keep others from crossing in front of you. Some drivers may not obey traffic signals or signs. At an intersection, look to the left and right, even if other traffic has a red light or a stop sign.

PROPER POSTURE WHILE DRIVING

The way you sit and hold the steering wheel affects your driving. Good posture can help you stay alert and in full control of your vehicle.

- Sit with your back straight, upright, and relaxed against the seat.
- Move your seat close enough so you can easily reach the pedals but far enough away that your elbows are in front of you when you hold the steering wheel.
- Keep both feet within reach of the floor controls.
- Keep both hands on the steering wheel.

STEERING

Use a proper grip. Place your left hand between the 7 & 9 o'clock positions and your right hand between the 3 & 5 o'clock positions on the steering wheel. This position is comfortable and allows you to make most turns without taking your hands off the wheel.

Look well down the road, not just at the road in front of your vehicle. Look for traffic situations where you will need to steer or slow before you get to them.

When turning corners, turn the steering wheel using the hand-over-hand technique. Do not turn the wheel with just the palm of one hand, because you could lose control. When you complete a turn, straighten out the steering wheel by hand.

Steering Wheel Locking Device — Never turn your vehicle's ignition key to the "lock" position while your vehicle is still in motion. This will cause the steering wheel to lock if you try to turn the steering wheel, and you will lose control of your vehicle.

FOLLOWING OTHER VEHICLES

Be sure to keep a safe distance between your vehicle and the vehicle in front of you. You need a safe distance to stop or turn to avoid a crash. Rear-end crashes are very common. They are caused by drivers who follow too closely and cannot stop in time when the vehicle ahead suddenly stops.

THREE SECOND RULE

A good way to measure your safe following distance is to use the "three second rule." Choose an object near the road ahead, like a sign or telephone pole. As the vehicle ahead of you passes it, count slowly, "One thousand one, one thousand two, one thousand three." If you reach the object before you finish counting, you are too close to the vehicle ahead.

SPACE BEHIND

It is not always easy to maintain a safe distance behind your vehicle. However, you can help keep the driver at a safe distance by keeping a steady speed, and signaling in advance when you slow down. Follow these safety tips:

- Try to find a safe place out of traffic to stop and pick up or let off passengers.
- If you want to parallel park and there is traffic coming behind you, put on your turn signal, pull next to the space, and allow vehicles to pass before you park.
- When you have to drive so slowly that you slow down other vehicles, pull to the side of the road when it is safe to do so, and let them pass. There are turnout areas on some two-lane roads you could use. Other two-lane roads sometimes have passing lanes.
- If you are followed too closely or "tailgated" by another driver, and there is a right lane, move over to the right. If there is no right lane, wait until the road ahead is clear and then reduce speed slowly. This will encourage the tailgater to drive around you. Never slow down quickly to discourage a tailgater. This will only increase your risk of being hit from behind.

SPACE TO THE SIDE

You need space on both sides of your vehicle to have room to turn or change lanes.

- Avoid driving next to other vehicles on multi-lane roads. Someone may crowd your lane or try to change lanes and pull into you. Move ahead or drop behind the other vehicle.
- Keep as much space as you can between yourself and oncoming vehicles. On a two-lane road, this means not crowding the center line. In general, it is safest to drive in the center of your lane.
- Make room for vehicles entering on a multi-lane roadway. If there is not a vehicle in the lane next to you, move over a lane.
- Keep extra space between your vehicle and parked vehicles. Someone could step out from a parked vehicle, from between vehicles, or a parked vehicle could pull out.
- Give extra space to pedestrians or bicyclists, especially children. They may move into your path quickly and without warning. Wait until it is safe to pass.
- When possible, take potential hazards one at a time. For example, if you are overtaking a bicycle and an oncoming vehicle is approaching, slow down and let the vehicle pass first so you can give extra room to the bicycle.

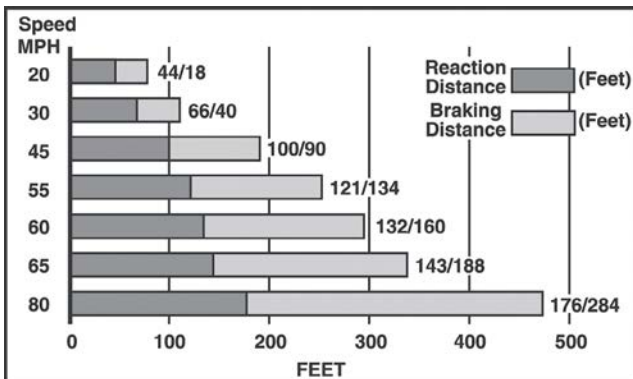
STOPPING DISTANCE

Your stopping distance equals your reaction distance plus your braking distance. If you are driving fast, are very tired, or if your vehicle has bad brakes, you will need more space to stop your vehicle.

The following distance equals your *reaction distance* plus your vehicle's *braking distance* at different speeds. The reaction distance is the distance you travel after you see a danger and before you apply your brakes. In the chart shown below, the reaction distance is for 1.5 seconds. You have to be alert to react within one and one-half seconds.

The braking distance is the distance you travel after you apply your brakes and before your vehicle comes to a stop. In the chart shown below, the braking distance is for a vehicle with good brakes and tires, in good weather and on a good road.

AVERAGE STOPPING DISTANCE OF CARS ON DRY LEVEL PAVEMENT



LETTING OTHERS KNOW WHAT YOU ARE DOING

Generally, other drivers expect you to keep doing what you are doing. You must warn them when you are going to change direction or slow down. This will give them time to react to what you do.

SIGNAL WHEN YOU CHANGE DIRECTION

You should use your turn signals before you change lanes, turn right or left, merge into traffic, or park.

- Get into the habit of signaling every time you change direction. Signal even when you do not see anyone else around. It is easy to miss someone who needs to know what you are doing.
- Signal as early as you can. Try to signal at least 100 feet before you make your move. If there are other streets, driveways, or entrances between you and where you want to turn, wait until you have passed them to signal.
- If another vehicle is about to enter the street between you and where you plan to turn, wait until you have passed it to signal your turn.
- After you have made a turn or lane change, make sure your turn signal is off. After small turns, the signal may not turn off by itself. Turn it off if it has not clicked off by itself. If you do not, other drivers might think you plan to turn again.

USING YOUR HORN

Do not use your horn unless you have to. Needless use of your horn may distract other drivers and cause a traffic crash. There is only one reason to use your horn: to warn other drivers. Your horn should not be used as a display of anger or frustration.

“SLOW POKE” DRIVING

It is against the law for you to drive slower than the posted minimum speed under normal driving conditions. You may drive more slowly than the minimum speed if you are driving in bad weather, heavy traffic, or on a bad road.

If there is no posted minimum speed, it is still against the law for you to drive so slowly that you block traffic. If you have to drive more slowly, and vehicles line up behind you, you should pull over and let them pass. Many crashes are caused by slow drivers who block other traffic. Remember, slower is not always safer.

CARBON MONOXIDE

Beware of carbon monoxide poisoning. Vehicle motors give off carbon monoxide which is a deadly gas. To avoid carbon monoxide poisoning:

- Do not leave the motor running in a garage.
- Do not leave the motor running and windows closed when you park your vehicle.
- Do not use the heater or air conditioner in a parked vehicle with the windows closed.
- Do not leave the vents open when following closely behind another vehicle.
- Do not drive with a defective muffler or exhaust system.

TIPS FOR AVOIDING A DEER-VEHICLE CRASH

You can reduce your odds of being involved in a deer-vehicle crash by applying these precautionary measures:

- Be especially alert and use caution when traveling through areas marked with deer crossing signs.
- Deer seldom travel alone. Chances are if you see one deer crossing a road or notice a struck deer on the side of the road, there are others nearby.
- Be especially cautious in areas around fields, streams, and gardens where deer tend to congregate.
- Most deer-related crashes occur in January, May, and October through December.
- Highest-risk periods are from sunset to midnight and the hours shortly before and after sunrise.
- After dark, use high beams when there is no opposing traffic. High beams will illuminate the eyes of deer on or near a roadway and provide greater motorist reaction time.
- To reduce the likelihood of serious injury in a crash, be sure all vehicle occupants wear seat belts and children are properly restrained in child safety seats.
- If you see that a crash is unavoidable, do not swerve. Swerving off the road or into the path of an oncoming car can increase the risk of injury. Make sure there is no traffic behind you before slowing suddenly. Too much brake pressure can cause the front end of the vehicle to drop down, striking the deer in the legs and allowing the body to come into the passenger compartment of the vehicle.
- If you are involved in a crash:
 1. Report the crash to a local law enforcement agency;
 2. Obtain a police report (if required) to file a claim for coverage with your insurance company; and
 3. Contact a local Missouri Department of Conservation agent to report where the crash occurred. This can help to identify frequent deer crossing areas.



WHAT IS DISTRACTED DRIVING?

Driving is a skill that requires your full attention to safely operate your vehicle and respond to events happening around you. Driving involves constant and complex coordination between your mind and body. Events or things that prevent you from operating your car safely are distractions. All distractions endanger driver, passenger, and bystander safety. These types of distractions include, but are not limited to:

- Texting;
- Using a cell phone or smartphone;
- Eating and drinking;
- Talking to passengers;
- Grooming;
- Reading, including maps;
- Using a navigation system;
- Watching a video;
- Adjusting a radio, CD player, or MP3 player; and
- Surfing the Internet.

Because text messaging requires visual, manual, and cognitive attention from the driver, it is by far the most high risk distraction. It is against the law for any person 21 years of age or younger to read, write, or send a text message or electronic message while operating a vehicle.

Are You Being Driven to Distraction?

- What do children, friends, and pets all have in common? All can be a dangerous distraction to you while you are driving.
- Teach your young children that driving is an important job and that you must concentrate when you are behind the wheel. If you need to attend to your children, pull over to a safe place. Don't try to handle children while you are driving.
- A carload of friends can be very distracting with loud talking, arguing over music selections, or horseplay. Arguments and other disturbing conversations should be held in a safe, appropriate place, not while you are driving in your vehicle.
- A loose pet in a moving vehicle can be very dangerous. Properly secure your pet in a pet carrier, portable kennel, or specially designed pet harness when you are driving. Never allow your pet to sit on your lap while you are driving your vehicle.

Turning Dials Can Turn Your Head

- Making destination entries on an in-vehicle navigation system, radio surfing for a good song, or adjusting your vehicle's climate controls are distracting activities that can put you in danger of a vehicle crash or near-crash. The availability of in-vehicle Internet and e-mail access from cell/smartphones, and other portable devices are added distractions that increase your risk of a crash if you engage in these activities while driving.
- Adjust vehicle's controls (climate controls, mirrors, radio, seat, etc.) before you begin to drive.
- Check your e-mail, voicemail, and any other portable devices you have before you begin driving.

- Place a message on your cell phone stating you are driving and will call them back later.
- Take advantage of normal stops to adjust controls.
- Ask your passengers to adjust the radio, climate control, navigation system, etc., for you.

Looks Can Kill ...

Looking out your window at what you are passing while you are driving can be a distraction if you are concentrating on getting a good look at:

- A crash scene;
- A vehicle pulled over by law enforcement;
- Construction work;
- A billboard advertisement;
- A scenic view; or
- Street names and addresses.

Always focus on your driving. It's crucial that you remain alert while on the road to arrive at your destination safely.