

Traffic Safety Tips

BUCKLE UP. It's the law. Besides, safety belts and restraint systems have saved countless lives. Make a habit of it, and be sure to check and make sure everyone else in your vehicle is buckled up as well. Additionally, don't forget to use the required safety seating for your children. Age/size-appropriate car seats and booster seats are available in many locations in many price ranges, and there are programs which help with providing child safety seats for those who need financial assistance. Also, when installing a child safety seat, be sure to read the directions so that you are certain you've installed it in your vehicle properly.

MINIMIZE DISTRACTIONS. There are a number of factors, which can take our attention away from the road, and we therefore have to avoid doing things that will divert our concentration away from safe driving. Drivers who were distracted while using mobile telephones, changing CDs in the stereo, smoking, eating, or even applying makeup or shaving have caused many accidents. When driving, we have to remember we have a responsibility to our loved ones, and to others, as well as to ourselves, to do everything within our power to stay focused on safety.

DON'T DRINK AND DRIVE. Although this seems very obvious, the unfortunate truth is that many people are driving under the influence of not just alcohol, but other mind or mood altering substances, including medications. The unnecessary tragedies caused by DUI related crashes can be avoided by two simple means: having a designated driver, or taking a cab.

STAY ALERT. In order to stay focused, it is important to get plenty of sleep and avoid driving when you have not had sufficient rest. On long drives, your ability to concentrate can be improved with periodic rest stops.

KEEP YOUR EMOTIONS IN CHECK. We have all experienced irritation when a careless driver has cut in front of us, or when someone has taken a parking space for which we have been waiting. It's natural to feel annoyed when these things happen. However, circumstances such as this can lead to unsafe driving if we let our emotions get out of hand. If something in traffic bothers you, be sure to keep in mind the "One Year Rule": before reacting, stop to think whether that event (a driver honking or yelling at you; someone cutting you off in traffic, etc.) will matter one year from now. The answer will likely be "no", and you probably won't even remember the event in a few months. Therefore, it's much better to let it go, rather than allow the foolish actions of another person to push us into making bad choices ourselves. If we don't keep a level head, situations like this can escalate to incidents of road rage and result in injury or even death.

Another consideration that affects our awareness is emotional distress. If you find yourself upset or emotionally distraught, it's best to wait until you are certain you have your emotions under control before driving.

OBEY THE SPEED LIMIT. This too seems like a very basic common sense rule of the road. We all must remind ourselves that the faster our vehicles are going, the less control we have over them, and the more severe the impact will be in the event of a crash. Therefore, be alert to the speed limit at all times, and comply with it.

BE FAMILIAR WITH, AND COMPLY WITH, ALL DRIVING-RELATED LAWS. There are many very affordable driver education courses, some of which are even available online to take at your convenience in the privacy of your own home. Besides educating yourself about the traffic laws and safe driving, these courses sometimes are linked to incentives from automobile insurance companies, which may make you eligible for a discount in your insurance premiums.

KEEP YOUR VEHICLE IN SAFE CONDITION. There is no "good" time for your vehicle to break down. However, it always seems that vehicle breakdowns happen at the worst possible time. Read your owner's manual regarding the recommended maintenance for your vehicle and establish a timetable for routine maintenance to be done so that your vehicle will run smoothly and safely.

A good, yet inexpensive tool to keep in your vehicle is a tire gauge. The air pressure in our tires can affect safety, handling, and gas mileage. It is therefore recommended that you check your tire pressure frequently to be sure they are properly inflated. Look for the "psi", or pounds per square inch, which is noted on the sidewall of every tire.

SET A GOOD EXAMPLE. When you practice good driving skills, others will notice; especially if the "others" happen to be your children, you can unwittingly be teaching them positive or negative driving habits. Be aware of the impact your behavior can have on your children, and think about how this may affect the way they drive. By using safe driving habits to educate your children, you can create opportunities to have conversations with them about the responsibilities that come with the privilege of driving a vehicle.

Although we cannot control the actions of those around us, we can make wise and informed choices for ourselves and our loved ones, thereby reducing the odds that we'll be involved in a motor vehicle crash. Observing the laws which are designed to keep us safe on the roadways, along with following some common sense rules, may make the difference between a safe and pleasant driving experience and an accident, and it could save your life.