



Mat-Su Borough Vehicle Safety Program

Department of Public Works



Overview

- General Accident Statistics
- Vehicles Safety Tips
- Summary
- The Bottom Line!
- Resources

General Statistics

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Vehicle Safety Program

- According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, more than 2,000 deaths a year result from occupational motor vehicle incidents.
 - That number is more than 30 percent of the annual number of fatalities from occupational injuries.
 - These deaths include driver and passenger deaths in highway crashes, farm equipment accidents, and industrial vehicle incidents, as well as pedestrian fatalities

Vehicle Safety Program

- Motor vehicles accidents account for more deaths than all natural disasters combined.
 - In fact in the United States your chances of being injured in an motor vehicle accident is better than one in a thousand, in any one year.
 - If you are a male, than you are twice as likely to die in a motor vehicle accident than if you are a female.
 - Yet, if you are a female you are slightly more likely to be injured.
 - The ages of 16 and 24 are the most dangerous for both sexes.

Vehicle Safety Program

- Between the ages of 16 and 64 alcohol figures into over 20% of all fatal accidents, and between the ages of 21 and 44 almost 50% of all fatalities.
- Between the ages of 16 and 44 the fatality rate has declined since 1975. The most significant decline being in the 16 - 20 age group.
- About half of all property damage accidents result in injuries or fatalities.
- Since 1966 the rate of fatalities by population has fallen around 40%, by numbers of drivers over 50%, and by numbers of miles driven by almost 70%.

Vehicle Safety Program

- As we get older we are more likely to die as a pedestrian, but we are more likely to be injured the younger we are.
- Approximately 15% of people who die because of motor vehicle accidents are pedestrians, bicyclists or otherwise not in motor vehicles.
- Over 2/3 of people who die in vehicles are not properly wearing safety restraints.
- Your risk of dying in a motor vehicle accident is almost five times more likely in Mississippi than in Massachusetts.
- You are ten times more likely to die driving a motor cycle than if you are driving any other motor vehicle.

Vehicle Safety Tips





Pay Attention!



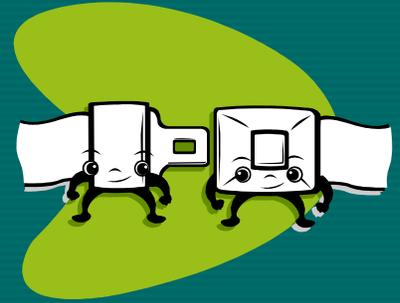
- It's aggravating to other drivers (as well as unsafe) when you aren't paying full attention to the road.
 - If you need to make an important call, read a map, open a package of ketchup for your fries, or battle with spilled coffee, do it by the side of the road. You only have two hands and two eyes.
 - Even a professional driver can't fully concentrate on maintaining control of a vehicle while simultaneously talking with a friend, arguing with the kids, or wolfing down lunch.
 - There are many distractions in daily life, but mixing that with all the modern toys, electronics, comfort and convenience controls, and thinking about driving is a recipe for an accident.
 - For those of us around you, as you multi-task, you are holding up traffic and causing a conga line at traffic lights, intersections, and parking lots.
- Keep your hands on the wheel, eyes on the road, and brain focused on what you're doing!

Safety Belts

- Use of Safety Belts
 - Seat belts do several things for you.
 - Provide impact protection,
 - Absorb crash forces, and
 - Keep you from being thrown out of the vehicle
 - Always wear your safety belt when driving and insist that your passengers wear a safety belt, too.
 - Wearing a safety belt is required by law in every state, except New Hampshire. In some states, passengers also are required by law to wear a safety belt.



Safety Belts



- No excuses!
 - "They wrinkle my clothes." Absolutely, they do.
 - "They're uncomfortable." Maybe so, but you can adjust them so they fit better. If you need to have your belts adjusted to fit, see your dealer.
 - "I want to be thrown clear of the vehicle in a crash." Oh yes, PLEASE, on my head! By the way, that's the number one cause of death in vehicle crashes.
 - "I don't want to be trapped if there's a collision, or my vehicle ends up in the water, or on fire." Wearing belts increases the likelihood you will be conscious after impact, less injured, and more able to get out. Seat belt failure or jamming isn't common.
 - "The government can't tell ME what to do! It's a free country!" Yes, it is. But what about other people's rights? When you don't wear belts and get injured, what happens when your insurance runs out? The public pays your medical bills, that's what. In my state, this costs taxpayers around \$35 million a year.
 - "I've heard of people who were in crashes who would have been killed if they'd been wearing belts." Who says so? Not any safety expert with whom I've ever spoken. If a collision can kill you with a belt on, then you're out of luck without the belt also, unless by a fluke. What I want is good odds. The statistics show that seat belts would prevent roughly 50% of deaths and injuries.

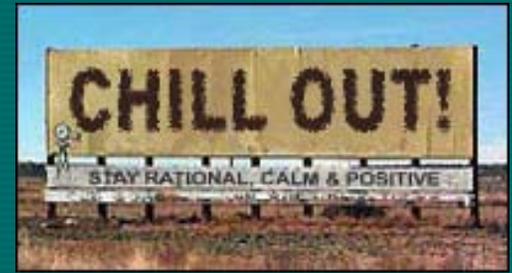


Drugs and Alcohol

- Do not drive while under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
 - Webster's New World Dictionary defines impairment as "making something worse, less, weaker, or damaged." Applied to driving, impairment means there is a factor present that decreases your ability to operate your vehicle safely.
 - Alcohol slows your reaction time, blurs and distorts vision, and impairs your judgment about distance.
 - Never use illegal drugs.
 - Read the labels on all prescription medications for warnings; consult your physician about how your medications or over-the-counter drugs could affect your driving.



Chill Out!



- Driving safely is all about attitude.
- Remember these words: "It doesn't matter."
 - When other drivers make mistakes, or are rude (even intentionally), what do you gain by letting it affect your attitude or behavior? It doesn't matter.
 - In ten minutes, you won't even remember that it happened. Since we are all human, we can't be perfect all the time.
 - Don't let the error the other driver commits be the reason you lose control (one way or another) and have a collision, or worse.
 - Many collisions occur when a driver is mad, upset, stressed, or distracted in some way. Try to keep your attitude rational, calm and positive.



Don't Run Red Lights!

- Running red lights is too dangerous, both for you and for others, no matter how pressured or late you are.
 - Slow down, grow some patience!
 - Pay attention to your driving so you aren't one of the oblivious red-light runners. And live to drive another day!
- Be careful around intersections.
 - If you get a yellow light, stop. You can anticipate when the light is about to change, so it is no excuse to say it was too late.
 - If you have the green light, watch for the red-light runner—look left, right, then left AGAIN to make sure the intersection is going to be safe before you enter it, even on one-way streets (because somebody might be going the wrong way AND running red lights).
 - Red light runners are often speeding as well, so make sure you look down the road far enough to see them coming.

Safe Driving Distances

- To maintain a safe distance between you and the car ahead, keep a following distance of at least two seconds.
 - Add one second for each adverse driving condition such as bad weather.



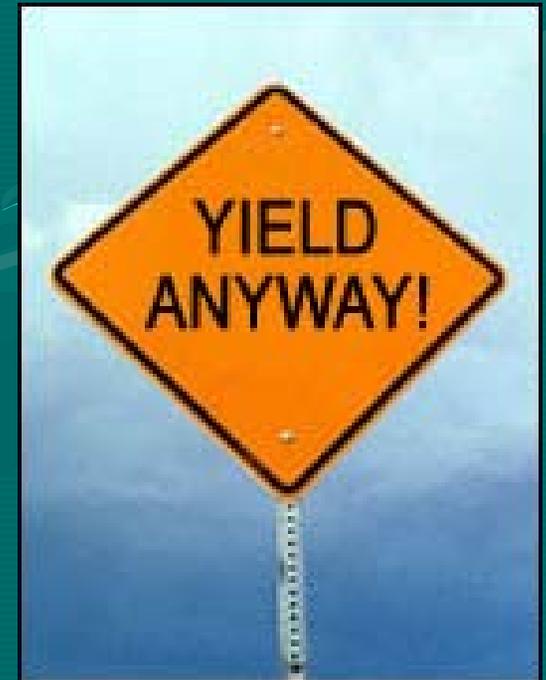
Don't Trust NOBODY!



- While you are driving, keep a wary eye on the other guy and leave yourself plenty of room. Anticipate the mistakes he might make and be ready for them. Eventually, he will!
 - Expect other drivers to make mistakes at intersections. Four preventative rules to follow are:
 - When approaching a green light, be prepared for it to turn red. It may have been green for a long time.
 - When stopped at a red light and it turns green, proceed slowly. Look left and right before you drive through the intersection.
 - Yellow lights mean proceed with caution, not speed up to get through the intersection before the light turns red.
 - Turning right at a red light is not permitted in every state. Even in states where it is permitted, turning right is not allowed in some intersections. Watch for signs at the intersection.

Yield Anyway

- “Nobody ever yielded their way into a collision.” Think about it.
 - If you are in doubt about who has the right of way, give it away. The other guy may be wrong, but you can end up hurt or dead.
 - We often say no one HAS the right-of-way until it is yielded to them. (Keep in mind I'm talking defensive driving practices, not traffic law.)
- Right of way rules are often misunderstood, and there are situations where the rules may not be clear to everyone.
 - If there is uncertainty about which vehicle should have the right of way, give the other guy the road. When it comes to driving safely, it's not the principle, but the outcome, that counts.



Passing Other Cars

- If you are going to pass a car, follow these rules:
 - Make sure you are in a passing zone.
 - Be certain that there is no oncoming traffic.
 - Look at all mirrors carefully before you make a lane change.
 - Look behind you for any vehicles that might be trying to pass you.
 - Be aware of any blind spots. Once the lane is clear, signal your move.
 - Move into the passing lane, and accelerate to pass the car in front of you.





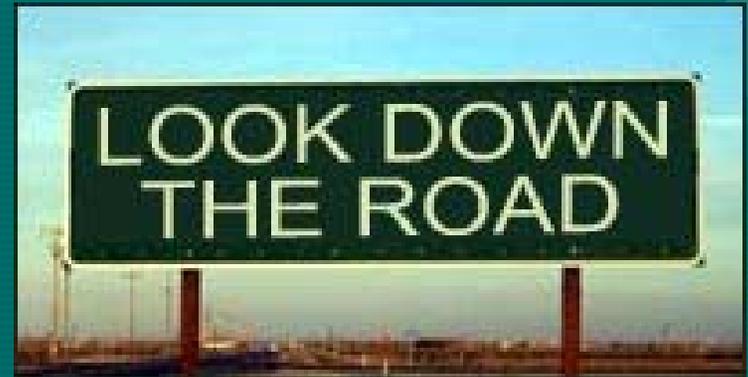
Don't Speed



- Driving at a higher than reasonable speed increases your risk in two ways:
 - It cuts your reaction time, and
 - Results in more "stored" energy (that must be dissipated in any collision). You should consider if the risks are worth the gain.
- This is the science of math and physics -- you cannot bend these rules.
 - Each incremental increase in speed reduces your ability to react in time to hazards, because you may be covering distance in less time than it takes to react. Normal reaction time is between .75 second and 1.5 seconds, on average.
- A defensive driver chooses a speed matching traffic as closely as possible without exceeding speed limits.
 - If traffic is moving at higher speed than you should go, keep to the right and out of the way.
 - This is often a legal requirement as well, if you are traveling at a speed less than the flow of traffic.
 - Also, don't neglect to maintain the correct following distance.
- Consider that speeding often doesn't save much time.

Look Down the Road

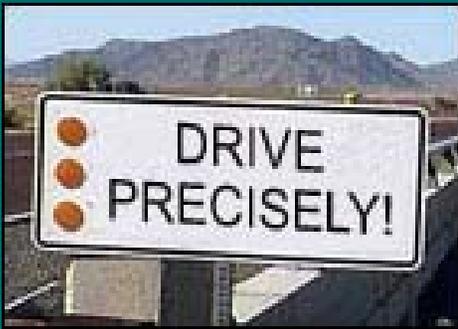
- This means keep your eyes UP and looking down the road.
 - Many drivers focus on the road only 5 or 8 seconds ahead.
 - You should be looking about 15-20 seconds ahead of your vehicle, farther if you can.
 - This gives you the time to recognize and avoid most potential hazards before they become a problem. You'll see lane restrictions or construction areas, traffic congestion, truck entrances, mishaps, etc.
 - Don't concentrate on any one thing in your field of view for more than a second.



Vehicle Maintenance

- Drive a well-maintained vehicle. Check the following elements at least once a week:
- Cooling system (radiator, radiator cap, thermostat, and hoses)
- Brakes and brake fluid
- Belts (fan, alternator, and air conditioning)
- Tires
- Engine fluids (motor oil, transmission fluid, and coolant)
- Lights
- Wiper blades





Drive Precisely!

- **Sloppy driving breeds mishaps!**
 - Most everyone knows the basics of the traffic laws;
 - Signaling,
 - Turning into the proper lanes,
 - Complying with traffic signs (like "No U-Turns," "No right turn on red," etc.),
 - Driving to the right except when passing,
 - Passing across double yellow stripes,
 - Really STOPPING for stop signs, and many others.
 - Drivers ignore them for the sake of expediency every day.
 - Rules are in place to create the consistency and uniformity that allow us to predict with some degree of confidence what the other guy is going to do, thereby avoiding conflicts and collisions.
 - Ignoring the rules of the road helps create the chaos you see every day. So, drive precisely, follow the rules, and watch out for the other guy!



Protect Thyself!



- “My father was broadsided at an intersection in Bakersfield, CA back about 1973. He was thrown from his motorcycle, about fifty feet or so, and landed on his head. His helmet (a Bell Shorty) saved his life, but he got a concussion that laid him up for a few weeks”

- “At about age 16, I was thrown off a motorcycle at 45 mph and, after an absolutely graceful, parabolic trajectory, I landed on my head. I had a good helmet on and I was able to limp away (gashed leg, and I had back pain for ten years)”.

“An acquaintance of mine, "Eric", was sitting in his driveway, on his shiny new Harley, polishing the gas tank. He lost his balance, fell over, and hit his head on the cement driveway (no helmet, as he wasn't going anywhere). He died 3 or 4 days later. You can suffer fatal head injuries in an impact as low as 4 mph”

Work Zone Safety Tips

- Stay alert! (Dedicate your full attention to the roadway)
- Pay close attention!
 - Signs and work zone flaggers save lives.
- Turn on your headlights!
 - Workers and other motorists must see you.
- Don't tailgate!
- Don't speed!
 - Note the posted speed limits in and around the work zone.
- Keep up with the traffic flow!
- Don't change lanes in the work zone!
- Minimize distractions!
 - Avoid changing radio stations and using mobile phones while driving in the work zone.
- Expect the unexpected (Keep an eye out for workers and their equipment).
- Be patient!
 - Remember the work zone crew members are working to improve your future ride.



Driving in Fog



- Driving in Fog
 - If your car is equipped with fog lamps, turn them on.
 - Slow down before you enter a patch of fog.
 - Be sure that you can stop within the distance that you can see.
 - Turn on your wipers and defroster to remove moisture from the windshield.
 - Use your low-beam head-lamps whether it is day or night. (High beams reflect off the fog and can impede visibility.)
 - Use the right edge of the road or painted road markings as a guide.
 - Watch out for slow-moving and parked vehicles.
 - Do not change lanes or pass other vehicles unless absolutely necessary.
 - If you must pull off the road, signal first, then slowly and carefully pull off as far as possible.
 - After pulling off the road, turn on your hazard flashers.
 - Snow and ice can make roads slippery. If your car goes into a skid, do not push down hard on the brakes. Take your foot off the accelerator and turn the steering wheel in the direction you want to go. Do not turn sharply. Use moderate turns of the wheel until you come out of the skid.
- Slow down as you approach shaded areas, bridges, and overpasses in winter. These areas freeze first and stay frozen longer.

Driving in Rain



- Skidding and Hydroplaning in Rainy Conditions
 - Losing control of your car on wet pavement is a frightening experience. You can prevent skids by:
 - Driving slowly and carefully, especially on curves.
 - Steer and brake with a light touch.
 - When you need to stop or slow, do not brake hard or lock the wheels and risk a skid. Maintain mild pressure on the brake pedal.
- If you do find yourself in a skid:
 - Remain calm, ease your foot off the gas, and carefully steer in the direction you want the front of the car to go.
 - For cars without anti-lock brakes, avoid using your brakes. This procedure, known as "steering into the skid," will bring the back end of your car in line with the front. If your car has ABS, brake firmly as you steer into the skid.



Driving in Rain

- Hydroplaning happens when the water in front of your tires builds up faster than your car's weight can push it out of the way. The water pressure causes your car to rise up and slide on a thin layer of water between your tires and the road. At this point, your car can be completely out of contact with the road, and you are in danger of skidding or drifting out of your lane, or even off the road.
 - To avoid hydroplaning, keep your tires properly inflated, maintain good tread on your tires and replace them when necessary, slow down when roads are wet, and stay away from puddles. Try to drive in the tire tracks left by the cars in front of you.
 - If you find yourself hydroplaning, do not brake or turn suddenly. This could throw your car into a skid. Ease your foot off the gas until the car slows and you can feel the road again. If you need to brake, do it gently with light pumping actions. If your car has anti-lock brakes, then brake normally; the car's computer will mimic a pumping action, when necessary.
- A defensive driver adjusts his or her speed to the wet road conditions in time to avoid having to use any of these measures.

Driving on Icy Roads



- Driving safely on icy roads:
 - Decrease your speed and leave yourself plenty of room to stop. You should allow at least three times more space than usual between you and the car in front of you.
 - Brake gently to avoid skidding. If your wheels start to lock up, ease off the brake.
 - Turn on your lights to increase your visibility to other motorists.
 - Keep your lights and windshield clean.
 - Use low gears to keep traction, especially on hills.
 - Don't use cruise control or overdrive on icy roads.
 - Be especially careful on bridges, overpasses and infrequently traveled roads, which will freeze first. Even at temperatures above freezing, if the conditions are wet, you might encounter ice in shady areas or on exposed roadways like bridges.
 - Don't pass snow plows and sanding trucks. The drivers have limited visibility, and you're likely to find the road in front of them worse than the road behind..
 - Don't assume your vehicle can handle all conditions. Even four-wheel and front-wheel drive vehicles can encounter trouble on winter roads.

Driving on Icy Roads



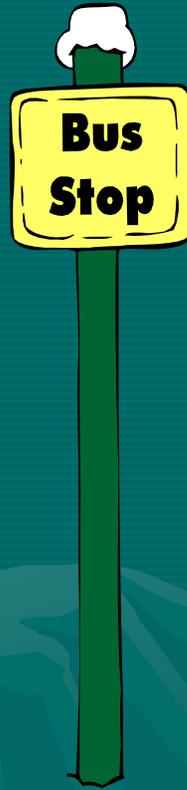
- **If your rear wheels skid...**
 - Take your foot off the accelerator.
 - Steer in the direction you want the front wheels to go. If your rear wheels are sliding left, steer left. If they're sliding right, steer right.
 - If your rear wheels start sliding the other way as you recover, ease the steering wheel toward that side. You might have to steer left and right a few times to get your vehicle completely under control.
 - If you have standard brakes, pump them gently.
 - If you have anti-lock brakes (ABS), do not pump the brakes. Apply steady pressure to the brakes. You will feel the brakes pulse -- this is normal.
- **If your front wheels skid...**
 - Take your foot off the gas and shift to neutral, but don't try to steer immediately.
 - As the wheels skid sideways, they will slow the vehicle and traction will return. As it does, steer in the direction you want to go. Then put the transmission in "drive" or release the clutch, and accelerate gently.

Driving on Icy Roads

- **If you get stuck...**
 - Do not spin your wheels. This will only dig you in deeper.
 - Turn your wheels from side to side a few times to push snow out of the way.
 - Use a light touch on the gas, to ease your car out.
 - Use a shovel to clear snow away from the wheels and the underside of the car.
 - Pour sand, kitty litter, gravel or salt in the path of the wheels, to help get traction.
 - Try rocking the vehicle. (Check your owner's manual first -- it can damage the transmission on some vehicles.) Shift from forward to reverse, and back again. Each time you're in gear, give a light touch on the gas until the vehicle gets going.



Driving on Icy Roads



- **If You Become Stranded...**

- Do not leave your car unless you know exactly where you are, how far it is to possible help, and are certain you will improve your situation.
- To attract attention, light two flares and place one at each end of the car a safe distance away. Hang a brightly colored cloth from your antenna.
- If you are sure the car's exhaust pipe is not blocked, run the engine and heater for about 10 minutes every hour or so depending upon the amount of gas in the tank.
- To protect yourself from frostbite and hypothermia use the woolen items and blankets to keep warm.
- Keep at least one window open slightly. Heavy snow and ice can seal a car shut.
- Eat a hard candy to keep your mouth moist.

Summary

A stylized illustration of two hands shaking in a firm grip, rendered in shades of teal and light blue, set against a dark teal background. The hands are positioned horizontally across the lower half of the frame, with the fingers interlocked. The word "Summary" is centered in the upper half of the frame in a white, serif font with a subtle drop shadow.

Summary

- Too many people forget that driving in America is *a privilege not a right*.
 - It is a privilege each citizen can enjoy, but one that also comes with an obligation to do so safely. If that obligation is not met, the privilege can be taken away.
 - The government can suspend or revoke a license, depending on the circumstances. What will help is if everyone obeys the "unwritten rules of the road."
- Remember, you do not have to obey the rules of the road, but if you don't, you may end up paying the price.
- **I am convinced that if everyone would** (1) not speed; (2) pay attention; (3) not drive impaired; and (4), wear seat belts (and use other safety systems such as air bags and ABS brakes), no one would ever get killed in a traffic collision. Just these four things, practiced habitually, would eliminate most serious collisions and save 50,000 lives each year.
 - Do the best you can. It will make your life, and life of those driving around you, a lot easier. In this day and age, it may even save your life.

The Bottom Line!



**Safety is Everybody's Responsibility,
Including Yours!**



Resources



Resources

- Road Trip America
 - <http://www.roadtripamerica.com/DefensiveDriving/Rule05.htm>
 - <http://www.disastercenter.com/traffic>
- The Weather Channel
(<http://www.weather.com/activities/driving/drivingtips/snowice.html>)
 - *National Safety Council, New York State Department of Motor Vehicles, Washington State Government Information & Services*
- U.S. Department of Labor Occupational Safety & Health Administration
(<http://www.osha.gov/>)