



# Safety Bulletin

## Driving Safely In Traffic

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When you are driving in traffic, what are some things you must do to avoid accidents? Avoiding accidents in traffic is a little different than avoiding accidents on the open road. Long-distance drivers know that fatigue is responsible for numerous accidents. But what causes accidents when you are driving around town, making frequent stops?

Many people spend a lot of time on the road as they are working. On any city street you are likely to see delivery vans, couriers, salespeople, and utility persons making frequent stops as they conduct their business. Some people spend many hours in traffic just going to and from work. Even though the mileage may be small, the amount of time spent on the road is very long. Every hour spent on the road increases your chance of having an accident.

Certainly speed is a factor in accidents. Many accidents happen simply because the driver is going too fast. City streets usually have speed limits of less than 25 miles per hour, and often you will see posted limits as low as 5 or 10 miles per hour. Speed limits are carefully selected to minimize the chances of accidents. When traffic is heavy, there just isn't very much distance between you and the next vehicle to stop. The slower you're going, the less distance it will take to stop. By going slowly, you will also be able to observe your surroundings more easily, taking note of cyclists, pedestrians, and other vehicles. Observing the speed limit is one sure way to reduce your chance of an accident. On rainy, foggy, or snowy days keep your speed even lower.

When you make stops, park your vehicle carefully. Avoid leaving it in a space that's likely to block traffic or create a blind spot. As you exit the vehicle look both ways before stepping into the road or onto the sidewalk. You'll want to avoid collisions with other vehicles as well as bicycles and passerby. If you must load things into or out of your vehicle, be sure your load does not obstruct your vision. It is better to make several trips with smaller loads than to overload yourself to the point you cannot see other vehicles. It will also help prevent tripping and falling over objects in your path.

Perhaps the main cause of accidents in traffic is a simple matter of not paying attention. In traffic, it is easy to become distracted, frustrated, and annoyed. Any of these can cause you to pay less attention than you should, often resulting in rear-end collisions when the vehicle in front of you stops. Running stoplights and stop signs is also a possibility if you are not paying attention.

Sometimes paying attention to the wrong things causes accidents, too. Reading addresses on buildings, street signs, and maps while driving can lead to accidents. You will be better off if you find a place to pull over safely while you read signs and addresses. Even better, try to pinpoint the exact location when you plan your trip--before you begin driving.

Fatigue is also a contributor to traffic accidents. After a long day's work, or perhaps a morning when you didn't rest well the night before, you are likely to feel tired. Feeling tired causes you to become distracted easily and also slows your reflexes. Don't take chances driving when you feel too tired to be safe. If fatigue is a frequent problem, see your doctor. For occasional fatigue, combat it with adequate rest, nutrition, and exercise.

To drive safely in traffic you must keep your speed down, pay attention, and avoid driving when you are tired. Following these precautions could prevent many accidents and injuries. Next time you're in traffic, remember these things and keep yourself safe!

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## Safety Bulletin



### Driving Safely When School Is In Session

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Students aren't the only ones who have to make adjustments when school reopens in the fall. Drivers need to make some major changes, as well. When school is in session, the driving environment presents a variety of serious hazards;

- Children behaving unpredictably,
- Changes in speed limits,
- New areas of traffic congestion; which probably were not present over the summer.

When the kids go back to school, drivers must go back to stricter driving rules. Whether you drive a tractor-trailer, a delivery van, a ready-mix truck, or a passenger car, you'll need to take special precautions as you travel in and around school zones.

#### **School Zones**

Warning signs are usually posted several hundred feet before you enter a school zone. These signs are there to alert you to the upcoming hazard, and to indicate a change in the posted speed limit. Reduce your speed as soon as you see the warning, and use extreme caution as you pass through the school zone. Be aware of the school zones that you travel through regularly, and change your driving habits as needed. Consider alternate routes if school zones create unacceptable delays in your travel time.

#### **School Crossings**

As you near a school zone, watch for warning signs indicating a school crossing, where children will be walking across the roadway. The pavement may or may not be marked with crosswalks, and there may or may not be a crossing guard to help control traffic in the area. Check the areas on both sides of the crossing zone to make sure no children are approaching, keep your speed low, and use extreme caution as you pass through the area.

#### **School Bus Stops**

School bus stop areas may be located anywhere on your route, and they typically are not marked with warning signs. Be on the lookout for children gathering along the sides of the roadways in anticipation of arriving school buses. If you see them, slow down and proceed with caution.

#### **Following School Buses**

It's a fact of life ; school buses make frequent stops. If you're behind a school bus, maintain a safe following distance. Never pass a stopped school bus. At each stop, children will be getting on or off the bus. They may need to cross in front of the bus, or they may dart out into the roadway unexpectedly. Be aware that school buses are also required to come to a complete stop before crossing railroad tracks. Following a school bus can be slow and frustrating, and there may not always be a safe, designated passing zone. If you travel along a school bus route regularly, allow extra time or consider using alternate routes during the school year.

#### **Traffic Congestion**

School zones may present traffic congestion in the early morning and mid-afternoon. Be prepared for delays as you travel in or around these areas.

No one wants to be involved in an accident, especially an accident involving a school bus or a young pedestrian. As autumn approaches and the school children, school buses, and school zones become active again, it's time to adapt your driving habits to reduce the hazards they present. Expect the unexpected; with children's safety at stake, this is one lesson you definitely won't want to learn the hard way

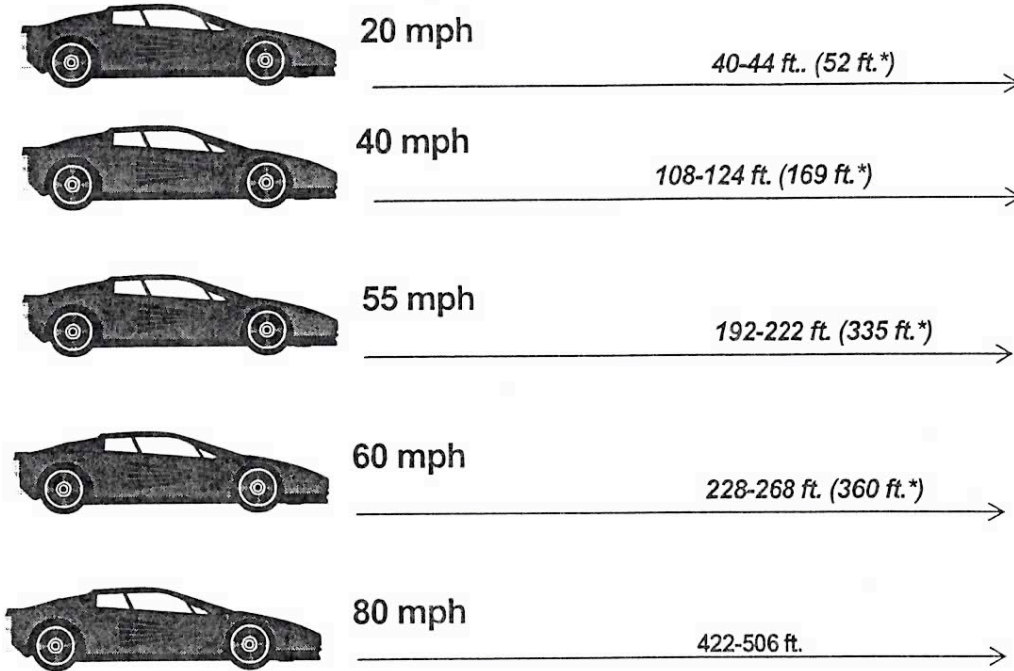
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## Vehicle Stopping Distances

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\* Numbers in parenthesis represent stopping distances of trucks with airbrakes.

### Reaction Distance Formula

$$\text{Reaction Distance} = \text{MPH} + 1^{\text{st}} \text{ Number in MPH}$$

Example: 45 MPH + 4 = 49 ft.

Speed	Reaction Distance
30	33 ft.
45	49 ft.
55	60 ft.
65	71 ft.



# Safety Bulletin

## Defensive Driving & Seat Belts

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More people are killed or injured in motor vehicle accidents than by any other type of incident, both on and off the job. Motor vehicle accidents represent nearly half of all accidental fatalities. The statistics are staggering:

- Someone dies from a motor vehicle accident every 11 minutes.
- Someone is injured in a motor vehicle accident every 18 seconds.
- In 1994, the cost of lost wages and lost productivity due to motor vehicle deaths and injuries amounted to 60.6 *billion* dollars.

Staying safe behind the wheel takes more than competent mechanical operation. It requires two more things—driving defensively and wearing a seat belt.

### **Defensive Driving - Always Be Prepared For The Worst.**

A good driver is always prepared for sudden traffic jams, mechanical failure or unexpected maneuvers by other drivers. As with any emergency situation, readiness can save lives.

Be a defensive driver. Protect yourself and others.

- Yield to drivers who are determined to get there first.
- Keep checking your rearview and side mirrors for approaching traffic and blind spots.
- Always anticipate that the other driver will do the unexpected—speed up, slow down, pass, etc.
- Avoid changing lanes unnecessary. This is when many accidents take place.
- Keep your mind on your driving, and your eyes on other vehicles.
- Carry emergency equipment—a jack, flares, flashlight, first-aid kit.
- Constantly look well ahead for changes in traffic or road conditions. When you see brake lights, slow down and be prepared to stop.
- Don't tailgate. Stay well behind other vehicles—especially trucks which block your vision.
- Never challenge another driver with words or gestures—even if they are at fault. Such challenges have been the source of many tragic acts of violence. Be cool.

## Use Your Seat Belt-All the Time!

Seat belts have saved more than 20,000 lives in the past decade and prevented nearly a half-million injuries. Seat belts are required by law, but some people still cling to unfounded myths, and resist wearing them, for example:

**Myth:** "My seat belt will trap me in the car if my vehicle catches fire or sinks underwater."

**Fact:** Only about one-half of one percent of accidents involve car fires or water. But even if you

do have such an accident, wearing a seat belt makes it more likely that you will remain conscious, and able to get out of the car.

**Myth:** "Without a seat belt on, I'm more likely to be thrown clear of harm in an accident."

**Fact:** You *are* more likely to be thrown out of the car if you're not wearing a seat belt-but this

is not good news. You are 25 times more likely to be *killed* if thrown from the vehicle.

**So, buckle up and drive as if your life depends on it. It Does!**

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