

DEFENSIVE DRIVING

Preventing Off The Job Auto Accidents

Even professional drivers can be the victims of off the job auto accidents. The family car may not seem as complex to operate as a big rig, but it is equally as prone to accidents and collisions unless it is driven with safety in mind. Safe driving is defensive driving—making sure that your vehicle is in good operating condition, following traffic rules and signals, looking out for the other driver, and adapting your driving to special conditions like bad weather, poor roads, and even your frame of mind. Safe driving also means never operating a vehicle while under the influence of alcohol or other drugs or medications.

Check your vehicle frequently—at least once a week—to be sure that it is in good working condition.



Check Your Vehicle

Check your vehicle frequently—at least once a week—to be sure that brakes, accelerator, belts, radiator, oil, battery, tires, head lamps, and brake lights are all in good working condition. If you notice *anything* abnormal in the way your car sounds or operates, bring it in for repair immediately.

Follow Traffic Laws

Traffic laws vary from state to state. Know your own state's laws, and if you are planning an out of state trip, familiarize yourself with the laws of the areas you'll be driving through. Many states allow right turns at red lights. This means that you must come to a complete stop first, check for pedestrians and oncoming vehicles, and then, if the road is clear, you may turn.

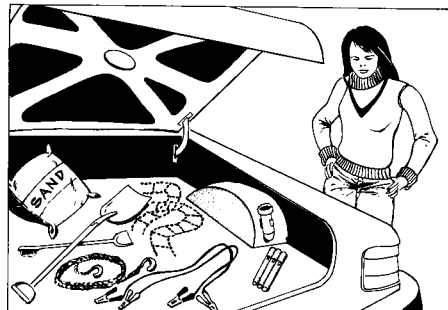
Watch The Other Driver

While you may be an excellent driver, there's no way of knowing if the other drivers on the road are as safe as

you. Stay clear of (and never try to pass) vehicles that swerve in and out of traffic, brake inconsistently, fail to signal, drive very slowly *or* very fast, or that do not respond to traffic signals quickly. Reduce your speed, if possible, or pull over and let the suspect vehicle get out of your way. Report suspicious drivers to the local police or highway patrol.

React To Special Conditions


Road and weather conditions can affect the way you drive. When roads are slick from rain, ice, or poor surfaces, reduce your speed and proceed cautiously.



Keep sand, chains, or salt in your car trunk, for winter emergencies.

Keep sand, chains, or salt in your car trunk to improve traction. If you skid, *do not brake*. Instead, take your foot off the accelerator, and turn the car in the direction you want the front wheels to go. In dense fog or heavy rain, where visibility is bad, pull to the side of the road if possible, and wait until conditions improve. (Keep your emergency flashers on so that oncoming drivers can see you.) When you start to drive again, use your low beams and proceed with caution. Always turn on lights at dawn and dusk when visibility is dim.

Stay Alert

The best defense you have against potential auto accidents is your own ability to remain alert and aware while driving. That's why alcohol, drugs, or other medications can be lethal when you drive. They affect your ability to concentrate and severely impair your reaction time which can lead to injury, disability, and all too often, death—not only of the driver, but of innocent victims as well. Be alert, be aware, and be safe. Defensive driving is everybody's business. 

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WHY WEAR SEATBELTS?

...To Save Your Own Life

Many states now have laws requiring drivers and passengers alike to wear seatbelts or pay a stiff price. Sadly, many people still resist using seat belts and pay an even stiffer price—their lives. If you're still unconvinced that seat belts can mean the difference between life and death in an auto accident, take a moment to consider the following information.



Seatbelts, like child safety seats, can make a life-and-death difference if you or your loved ones are involved in an automobile accident.

The Excuses

- 1) "I can't move with those belts on—they're so uncomfortable!"
- 2) "It's better to be thrown out of the car than be trapped in by a seatbelt."
- 3) "I only drive around town; how can I get hurt going 25 miles per hour?"
- 4) "I'm a good driver. I've never had an accident."

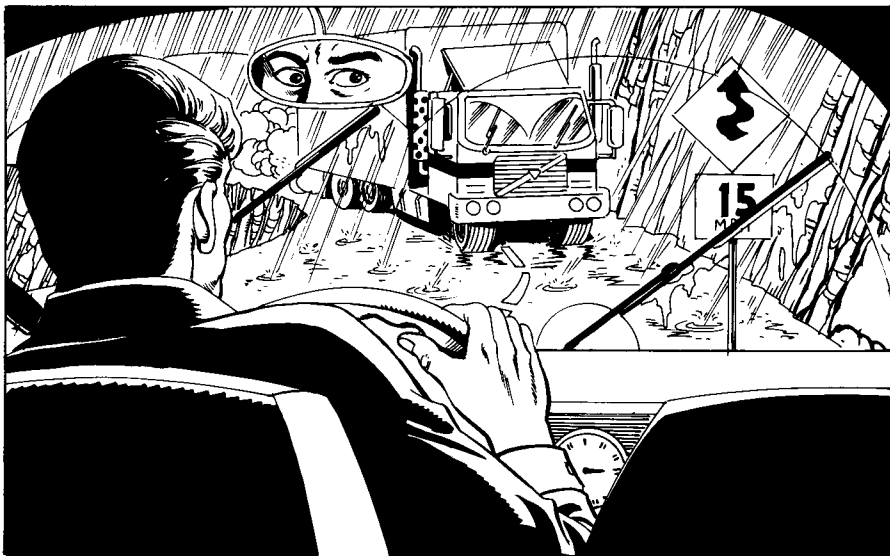
The Answers

- 1) The fact is, newer seatbelt design allows for total freedom of motion while driving. The latching device that secures the belt only goes into effect when the car jolts abruptly, as in an accident.
- 2) People who are thrown from cars are 25 times more likely to be killed than if they had been held

securely in their seats. Further, in the unlikely event your car catches fire or is submerged, seatbelts can keep you from getting "knocked out" and greatly improve your chances of escape.

3) The majority of all car accidents occur within 25 miles of home—and 80% of all serious injuries and fatalities occur in cars going 40 miles per hour or slower.

4) You may be a good driver, but there are situations beyond your control such as weather and road conditions (not to mention other drivers) that can affect your safety. Drive preventively and use your seatbelt.



Why use a seatbelt? You may be a good driver, but weather and road conditions, and other less competent drivers can affect your safety.

Safe and Secure

When all is said and done, it pays to remember that seatbelts were designed with your safety and security in mind. Seatbelts, like safety seats for children, can make a life-and-death difference if you or your loved ones are involved in an automobile accident. Use your seatbelt. The life you save may be your own.



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