

## ***Safety: Safe Driving Practices Handout Personal Support Specialist***

*The following information was adapted from Cyberdriveillinois – a public resource for drivers developed by the Office of the Secretary of State – State of Illinois.*

### **1. Alert Driving**

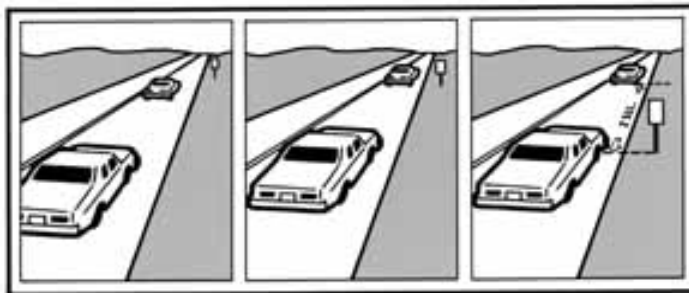
A driver must concentrate on the road and drive defensively.

**CONCENTRATION:** Operating a vehicle safely demands that the driver concentrate on driving. The person should be rested, calm and not under the influence of alcohol or other drugs.

One of the greatest hazards of roadway driving is drowsiness or “highway hypnosis.” Lack of sleep or fatigue impact your ability to safely drive your vehicle. When taking a long trip, avoid drowsiness by stopping frequently to drink coffee, exercise, or nap. Exercise your eyes by reading road signs or shifting the focus of your eyes to different parts of the roadway. Make sure you are properly rested.

**DEFENSIVE DRIVING:** Plan ahead for the unexpected. Always be prepared to react to the other driver. Do not expect the other driver to do what you think he or she should do. Do not think you know what he or she is going to do. If you cannot avoid a crash, remain calm and try to choose the least dangerous situation. For example, running into a ditch is less dangerous than a head-on collision. Also, your chances of survival are greater if your vehicle is in good mechanical condition.

### **Vehicle Following Distances**



**TWO-SECOND RULE:** Following a vehicle too closely is called “tailgating.” Use the two-second rule to determine a safe following distance. Select a fixed object on the road ahead such as a sign, tree or overpass. When the vehicle ahead of you passes the object, count “one-thousand-one, one-thousand-two.” You should not reach the object before you count to one-thousand-two. If you do, you are following too closely. Most rear end collisions are caused by the vehicle in back following too closely.

The two-second rule also applies to your speed when you are on a good road and during good weather conditions. If the road and/or weather conditions are not good, increase your distance to a four or five-second count. If you are being tailgated, move to another lane or slowly pull off the road and allow the vehicle to pass.

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## Two-Second Rule

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<b>Vehicle Speed</b>	<b>Approximate Feet Vehicle Will Travel in 1 Second</b>	<b>2 Second Rule Distance</b>
25 m.p.h.	37 ft.	74 ft. back
35 m.p.h.	52 ft.	104 ft. back
45 m.p.h.	66 ft.	132 ft. back
55 m.p.h.	81 ft.	162 ft. back

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## 2. Vehicle Speed

**MINIMUM AND MAXIMUM SPEEDS:** You should use common sense when driving. Driving too fast or too slowly may create a dangerous situation. Regardless of the posted speed limit, weather and traffic conditions may make it necessary to drive more slowly.

However, driving too slowly can also be dangerous. Your speed should be adjusted for the conditions and match the flow of traffic, as long as it does not surpass the maximum posted speed.

**STOPPING:** The ability to stop your car safely should be considered when deciding your speed. You should consider the following:

- How quickly you can react physically and mentally.
- The type and condition of the roadway. It will be more difficult and take longer to stop on wet asphalt.
- The kind of tires you are using and the condition of their tread. Large, wide tires with good tread will stop a vehicle faster than small, narrow tires with little tread.

- The type, condition, and adjustment of your brakes.
- The direction and speed of the wind. A strong tail wind can make it very difficult to stop.
- Vehicle design, weight distribution, suspension and shock absorbers.

### 3. Weather Conditions

Weather can create a driving hazard. Special care must be taken in fog, rain, high winds, and winter driving conditions.

**FOG:** It is best not to drive in fog. However, if you must drive in fog, take the following precautions:

1. Slow down. If you see headlights or taillights, slow down even more. A driver may be driving in the center of the roadway or may be stopped or barely moving.
2. Drive with your headlights set on dim, or use fog lights.
3. Do not overdrive your headlights. Stay within the limits of your vision. You may have to stop suddenly. If the fog is too dense, pull off the roadway and stop. Do not drive at five or 10 miles per hour.
4. Use your turn signal long before you turn and brake early when you approach a stop to warn other drivers.



**RAIN:** When rain begins to fall lightly, water, dust, oil, and leaves cause the roadway to become slippery. When this happens, increase your following distance. Take special care on curves and turns and while braking. Your headlights must be on when operating your wipers. Parking lights are not acceptable.



When rain begins to fall heavily, your tires may “hydroplane.” This means the tires are riding on a layer of water and not on the roadway. Avoid hydroplaning by slowing down. If you skid while hydroplaning, try to regain control of the vehicle. Otherwise, release the accelerator and ride out the skid.

**HIGH WINDS:** Wind can be a difficult problem for all drivers. Wind is especially difficult for drivers of trucks, recreational vehicles, campers, and trailers-in-tow. In high winds, you should reduce your speed and make steering corrections when you go from a protected area to an open area and when meeting large vehicles such as trucks and buses. Heavy rain or sleet often accompanies high winds. You should be alert to wet or slippery areas and plan for those conditions.



**WINTER DRIVING:** Winter is the most difficult driving season due to many reasons, including ice, snow, lower temperatures and fewer daylight hours. When driving in winter conditions:



1. Drive slower and increase your following distance. Roadway conditions may vary depending upon the sun, shade, or roadway surface.
2. Remove all snow and ice from your vehicle. Clear all windows, and do not start driving until your windshield is defrosted and clear. Be sure you have non-freezing windshield washer liquid and that your headlights and taillights are visible.
3. Be sure your vehicle is maintained properly. Lights, brakes, windshield wipers, defrosters, radiator, and other parts should be in good working order.
4. Use snow tires and/or chains (where allowed). Snow tires give you extra traction, and chains increase safety on snow or ice packed roads. Neither tires nor chains allow you to drive on bad roads at normal speeds.
5. Start slowly. Gentle braking, in slow, steady strokes, helps you find out how much traction you have. Begin braking early when you come to an intersection or a stop.
6. Approach bridges, shaded spots, overpasses and turns slowly. They may remain icy after the rest of the roadway is clear and dry.
7. Plan your winter driving. Carry a blanket, food, and other survival equipment, such as a shovel, in your vehicle in case you become stranded. If you become stranded, remain in your vehicle. Run your engine only for brief times, and open your window to prevent carbon monoxide poisoning. Make sure your vehicle tailpipe is free of snow and debris.

## 8. Special Driving Situations

Just as weather and equipment affect your safety, other driving situations also require extra caution. These include:

**HIGHWAY DRIVING:** Expressways, toll roads, turnpikes, and freeways are fast, multiple-lane roads. The maximum speed limit is 55 or 65 miles per hour. Here are some tips for safe driving on expressways:

1. **GETTING ON HIGHWAYS:** When entering an expressway, you will usually find a speed-change lane. This lane allows you to gain the speed necessary before merging. You should signal and look for an opening in the traffic, match traffic speed and merge with traffic when safe.

2. **GETTING OFF HIGHWAYS:** Exits may be on the right or left. Be sure to be in the correct exit and speed-change lanes. Signal your intent then slow down to make your exit in the speed-change lane.

3. **DRIVING ON HIGHWAYS:** You should be especially alert when driving on highways. Speed and traffic volume are major concerns. Remember:

- Check your rearview and side mirrors before changing lanes.
- Use your turn signals when making lane changes.
- Go to the next exit if you missed yours. Backing up on highways is against the law.
- Do not follow too closely. Allow plenty of distance between you and the car ahead.
- The right lane is for slower traffic. The left lane is used for faster traffic and for passing.
- Do not stop on the highway. Pull off the road if you have a problem. Lift your car's hood and turn on your hazard flashers. Do not walk along the highway.

**NIGHT DRIVING:** Night driving is difficult because things may appear differently than in daylight. Also, glare from lights may interfere with vision. Courtesy and common sense should be used when driving at night. Remember:

Never overdrive your headlights. Always keep them clean and aimed properly. Use them at dusk and dawn. Bright lights must be dimmed 500 ft. before meeting an oncoming vehicle or 300 ft. before passing a vehicle.

If streetlights cause a lot of glare, dim your dashboard lights and use your sun visor. Avoid using any other light inside your vehicle.

Roadway signs are more difficult to see at night.

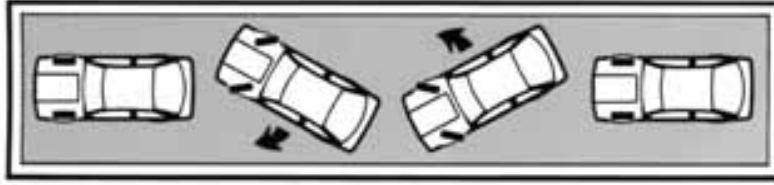
Use edge lines and centerlines of the roadway as guides.

Do not stop on the roadway. If you must stop, carry and use a red warning light.

**CURVES:** Slow down before beginning the curve. Do not brake suddenly as this may cause skidding or locked wheels. Never drive over the centerline.

**HEAD-ON APPROACHES:** When a vehicle is approaching head-on in your lane, slow down immediately. Pull over to the right and sound your horn.

**SKIDDING:** Skidding occurs when tires lose traction. If you skid, ease off the gas pedal or brakes. Steer into the direction of the skid until you feel you have regained traction and then straighten your vehicle.



**DRIVING OFF THE PAVEMENT:** If your wheels drift off the pavement onto the shoulder, grip the wheel firmly, ease your foot off the gas pedal, and brake gently. After checking for traffic behind you, gently steer back onto the pavement. Do not jerk your wheel to correct your steering. This may cause you to drive into oncoming traffic.

**FIRE:** If smoke appears, pull off the road. Turn off the engine, move away from the vehicle, and call the fire department. Vehicle fires can be very dangerous. Do not fight the fire yourself.

**WATER ACCIDENTS:** If your vehicle runs off the roadway into water but does not sink right away, try to escape through a window. Because of differences in water pressure, you may not be able to open your car door. If your vehicle does sink, move to the back seat area where an air pocket usually forms. Take a deep breath and exit from a rear window.

**CELLULAR PHONE USAGE:** When using your cellular phone while driving, always remember your number one responsibility is driving. If you do use a cellular phone, take the following precautions:

1. Always assess traffic conditions before calling.
2. Be familiar with the phone's keypad – use speed dial if possible.
3. Place calls when stopped, or have a passenger dial.
4. Ensure phone is within easy reach.
5. Use speaker phone/hands-free device.
6. Avoid intense, emotional, or complicated conversations.
7. Avoid talking on phone in congested traffic or bad weather.
8. Pull off road to dial or complete a conversation.





**NOTE:** Before transporting a consumer using their car, make sure that their insurance policy will cover you if an accident occurs (often, this will involve a call to your supervisor). If you are doing homecare, check with your supervisor before transport.

Consumers transported via car should be supervised at all times.