

AT-RISK BEHAVIORS BEHIND THE WHEEL



WEATHER CONDITIONS

Weather conditions impact driver capabilities and vehicle performance, especially when drivers are:

- Driving too fast for the condition of the road or the environment, such as damaged roads, heavy rain, snow, ice, hail, congested traffic or constant changes in traffic
- Constant lane changing
- Driving while distracted
- Crossing flooded roads
- Not using wipers or headlights when necessary
- Not maintaining the health of the vehicle (tires, wipers, etc.)
- Inexperienced drivers operating in dangerous and at-risk conditions

RECENT TRANSPORTATION DATA

According to the U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration, 10-year annual averages of weather and related crash statistics reveal:

- 21% of reported vehicle crashes are weather-related
- 418,005 people are injured
- There are 5,376 fatalities

AT-RISK BEHAVIORS WHEN DRIVING

Limited visibility caused by bad weather can greatly increase the chance of a vehicle collision. Environmental hazards like snow, sleet, ice and fog can increase the chance of wet roads. It is extremely important to practice safe driving behaviors while driving in these unpredictable weather conditions. These conditions can also elicit extreme circumstances when a storm turns into a tornado, torrential rain/snow or severe lightning. Plan a safe strategy in case you find yourself in any of these conditions.

What conditions are you comfortable driving in and in what conditions do you need to seek shelter? Pay attention to weather alerts while you are driving. During a tornado, weather alerts will direct you to the safest location.

Remember:

- Your visibility can be impacted in poor weather conditions.
- Roads tend to be slippery in wet conditions, and this can impact your ability to brake. Keep a safe distance of four car lengths or more when traveling around others. If traffic is congested, maintain a slow speed so you can easily come to a full stop.
 - Maintaining a slow speed will also limit your car from fishtailing or hydroplaning and allow you to regain control. The slower you go, the quicker you will be able to regain control of your car if an unexpected hazard occurs.
- Watch for debris blowing around on the road during high winds or a tornado.



- Be cautious of flooded roads as they can often hold unseen hazards.
- Do not attempt to cross a road that looks flooded. Individuals have drowned when they drive their car on a road that has high water because the water is deeper than expected.
- Be aware that other drivers might not see you, and always turn your lights on when driving in bad weather.
- Beware of hydroplaning. Take the time to learn how to recover your vehicle if you do hydroplane.

SAFE DRIVING STRATEGIES

- Plan to give yourself extra time to get to your destination.
- Keep a safe distance from other vehicles and drive slowly so you have enough time to brake and maintain control of your vehicle.
 - To keep a safe distance from other vehicles, you should have at least two car lengths in normal conditions and four car lengths in bad weather. If traffic is congested, reduce your speed and drive in the far right lane.
- Always use your low beams and fog lights for better visibility and so others can see you.
- Watch for weather alerts. If threatening weather persists, weather alerts will guide you to a safe location and tell you if you need to seek shelter.
 - In some situations, it is recommended to park under a bridge. This will keep you from getting hit by hail and flying debris. Watch for other, less-experienced drivers who might not know what to do.
 - In a situation like this, know where your cellphone is located. Do not keep it in the dashboard console or backseat; keep it with you in case you need to call for help in an emergency.
- Always wear your safety belt and require all passengers to wear theirs, too.