

AT-RISK BEHAVIORS BEHIND THE WHEEL



IGNORING AT-RISK MOMENTS

Being complacent and ignoring hazardous driving situations can increase your risk of a collision.

AT-RISK BEHAVIORS WHEN DRIVING

Tailgating, distracted driving, speeding, construction zones, blind spots, weather conditions, winding roads, intersections and parking lots all pose unique challenges. Remaining vigilant, alert and attentive to these at-risk conditions and the challenges they pose is key to your ability to respond defensively and keep you safe.

SAFE DRIVING STRATEGIES

- Always maintain a safe following distance when driving behind another vehicle. To determine if you are following at a safe distance, pick a stationary object along the road ahead of you. Once the vehicle in front of you passes the stationary object, count the number of seconds it takes you to reach the object. If you reach the object before a count of three seconds (or three car lengths), you are too close. The number of seconds should increase when weather conditions are unfavorable. According to the National Safety Council, many collisions are caused by drivers following too closely to the vehicle in front of them.
- Always keep your eyes moving; look ahead and watch your rearview and side mirrors. Keeping your eyes fixated too long in one direction reduces your ability to scan for and identify hazards.
- Anticipate the unexpected or what may be hiding around the corner. In urban, congested areas, be ready to stop quickly for vehicles, pedestrians, or other objects entering traffic. In rural areas, anticipate animals or debris entering or lying in the road.
- Heighten your awareness when entering intersections. Don't assume a vehicle will stop when a traffic light turns from yellow to red. Look both ways and slowly accelerate from a stop once you know that oncoming vehicles have stopped.
- Avoid making left turns when possible. Left turns often take you against traffic and in the path of oncoming cars. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, turning left is one of the most dangerous moves on the road and is 55 times more dangerous than making a right turn. Instead of making an unprotected left turn, use an intersection with a traffic light and left-turn arrow (protected left turn) when possible. You may also consider going to the next intersection and making three right turns to use intersections with traffic lights.
- When traveling on roads with concrete barriers, limit the time you spend trapped between the barrier and a vehicle. Vehicles can drift over into the lane next to the barrier, trapping you without the ability to escape from the lane.
- Never drive next to a truck for an extended period. Either pass the truck or stay behind it.
- Remember, blind spots (especially on 18-wheeler trucks) can make it difficult for drivers to see you.
- If possible, pull through or back into a parking space when parking your vehicle. This provides a wide field of vision to see pedestrians and traffic when you leave a parking space. If you back out of a parking space, the cars parked beside you directly block your view. Collisions from backing out of parking spaces were so common that in 2019, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration mandated that all new vehicles under 10,000 pounds have rear-visibility technology.

