



# **Guidelines for Safe Driving**

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# CONTENTS

How to Back Up Safely	Page 1
Seat Belts	Page 2
Safety Tips - Highway Driving	Page 3
Drinking and Driving	Page 4
Driving Under the Influence Doesn't Just Mean Alcohol	Page 5
Be a Freeway Pro	Page 6
Railroad Crossing	Page 7
How to Avoid Hydroplaning	Page 8
How to Safely Navigate Traffic Intersections	Page 9
How to Safely Deal with a Tailgating Vehicle	Page 11
Know Your Blind Spots	Page 12
What to Do When Your Brakes Fail	Page 13
Reduce Your Risk of Becoming a Carjacking Victim	Page 14
Safety Tips for Driving with a Trailer	Page 15
Other Guidelines – Car Rental Contracts	Page 17
Car Rental Safety Tips	Page 19
University Van Inspection Forms	Page 21

# GUIDELINES FOR SAFE DRIVING

## How to Back Up Safely

**Many fender-benders occur** when drivers back up. Several years ago, my state purchased a fleet of fifty full-size vans for the use of state agencies. Within a couple of years, all but ONE of those vans had backing damage of one kind or another—the only one that didn't was the one used by the driving instructors to TEACH employees how to drive the vans! I have heard that many other companies with fleet vehicles report the same problem, and it's not just vans.

**Since the risks are higher for collisions while backing**, take special care to make sure you don't back-up without visually clearing the area behind the vehicle first. Many times each year, children are run over in their own driveways because drivers didn't look behind their vehicles first. For this reason, many companies require their drivers to place an orange traffic cone behind their vehicles when they park, forcing them to look behind it again as they pick up the cone prior to driving away.

**Once you've cleared the area behind you**, turn and look to the rear while you back. In trucks, you may not be able to see directly to the rear, except in the side view mirrors. It's always a good idea to have a "spotter" behind you in these circumstances, a second person standing behind your vehicle where you can see them, giving you information about how you are doing. Keep your speed very low—down to a crawl.

**There are a couple more ways to protect against parking lot mishaps.** If you can, pick a parking spot you can pull straight into and on to the next row, so that when you depart, you are pulling forward out of your spot instead of backing up. In busier parking lots where this is not possible, try backing into your parking space to begin with instead of backing out when you leave. The advantage is you can visually clear the parking spot as you approach it, adding a bit of extra safety, and then exit it forward instead of backing into the driving lane as you leave.

**Many people think it is illegal to back up on a roadway.** This is not always the case. In some states, for example, you can back up on a roadway as long as you do so safely—but that's the real issue, isn't it? It's not easy to be safe when trying to back up on a roadway you're sharing with many other vehicles and pedestrians. One situation where you shouldn't back up is when you overrun a "stop line" at an intersection while stopping for a red light (or stop sign). If this happens, and you find yourself straddling the crosswalk, it is usually better to stay where you are, rather than backing up to the proper place. Backing up through a crosswalk can be much more dangerous for obvious reasons.

**Another exception is on controlled access highways**, where it is illegal to stop or back up anywhere on the right-of-way, including shoulders, gore areas, off-ramps and access roads. As always, you should check the law in YOUR state so you know what the law is where you drive, but also consider that just because something is legal doesn't always mean it is safe.

# Seat Belts

**Without a doubt, seat belts are the most significant safety device ever invented.** Seat belts do several things for you. They provide impact protection, they absorb crash forces, and they keep you from being thrown out of the vehicle. Modern vehicles are built with "crumple zones," and seat belts are an integral part of the system. The belts hold you in place while the vehicle collapses around your "safe" zone. Belts help keep you in your place, in control, and better able to avoid a crash.



If you're in the front seat during a crash, wearing a safety belt improves your chance of survival by 50 percent. Wearing lap and shoulder belts (combined with air bags) is the most effective way to reduce fatalities and serious injuries in traffic collisions.

Safety belts are most effective when used properly.

- ☐ Lap belts should fit snugly across the hips, not over the stomach.
- ☐ Shoulder belts go over the shoulder and across the center of the chest.
- ☐ Never tuck a shoulder belt under your arm or behind your back.

## Here's the Law

Texas law requires drivers and front seat passengers in all vehicles to be secured by a safety belt. Children under 17 years old must be secured with a safety belt or in a child safety seat, whether they are sitting in the front or back seat. A child under 5 years old and less than 36 inches tall must ride in a child safety seat. A safety belt violation can result in fines ranging from \$25 to \$200, plus court costs.



# Safety Tips - Highway Driving

## Speed Limits

The maximum daytime speed limit on most interstate and state highways in Texas is 70 miles per hour. At night, the maximum speed limit is 65 miles per hour.

Observing speed limits means more than driving faster or slower than the posted speed: it means driving to conditions. When it's raining or foggy, when ice is on the road, when traffic is heavy or when road construction is ahead, adjust your speed accordingly.

## Keep Right

Watch for signs on Texas multi-lane highways that read "Left Lane For Passing Only." These signs let you know that the left lane on a divided highway is not a "fast" lane; it is a passing lane. After you pass someone, move into the right lane once you've safely cleared the vehicle.

Impeding the flow of traffic by continuing to drive in the left lane is punishable by a fine of up to \$200.

## Sharing the Road with Trucks

Trucks can weigh up to 80,000 pounds and may need up to 100 yards to stop. Here are some tips to help keep you safe when you drive near trucks:

- ☐ Maintain a safe following distance. When the vehicle in front of you passes a fixed object, you should be able to count at least two seconds before you pass the same object.
- ☐ Don't squeeze between trucks and the curb. Trucks make wide right turns, and the driver may not see you.
- ☐ When passing a truck, don't move back into your lane until you can see both truck headlights in your rearview mirror.
- ☐ Be aware of a truck's blind spots: up to 20 feet in front of the tractor, anywhere along the sides of the trailer and up to 200 feet behind the trailer.
- ☐ Never cross behind a truck that is backing up.

## Move Over

When you approach a stopped emergency vehicle with lights flashing, state law requires that you:

- ☐ Move a lane away from the emergency vehicle, or
- ☐ Slow down 20 miles per hour below the posted speed limit.

Failure to comply could result in a fine of up to \$200.

## Give Yourself a Break

If your eyes close or go out of focus, you can't stop yawning, your thoughts wander or you're drifting between lanes, wake up: you're a "drowsy driver." Try to stay alert by doing the following:

- ☐ Get plenty of rest before your trip.
- ☐ Get out of your vehicle and stretch your legs every two hours. Rest for 15-20 minutes during each stop.
- ☐ Avoid driving between midnight and 6 a.m.

☐ Don't drink and drive - even small amounts of alcohol can impair your judgment and your reaction time.

## **DRINKING & DRIVING**

Driving while either intoxicated or drunk is dangerous and drivers with high blood alcohol content (BAC) are at greatly increased risk of car accidents, highway injuries and vehicular deaths. Possible prevention measures examined here include establishing DWI courts, suspending or revoking driver licenses, impounding or confiscating vehicle plates, impounding or immobilizing vehicles, enforcing open container bans, increasing penalties such as fines or jail for drunk driving, and mandating alcohol education. Safety seat belts, air bags, designated drivers, and effective practical ways to stay sober are also discussed.

## **THE PROBLEM**

Every single injury and death caused by drunk driving is totally preventable. Although the proportion of crashes that are alcohol-related has dropped dramatically in recent decades, there are still far too many such preventable accidents. Unfortunately, in spite of great progress, alcohol-impaired driving remains a serious national problem that tragically affects many victims annually.



## **THE FACTS**

Alcohol impaired driving is one of America's most-often-committed and deadliest crimes. Overall in 2012, more than 10,000 people were killed in alcohol-impaired driving crashes - one every 51 minutes. Alcohol-impaired motor vehicle crashes cost more than an estimated \$37 billion annually. Most drivers who have had something to drink have low blood alcohol content (BAC) and few are involved in fatal crashes. On the other hand, while only a few drivers have BACs higher than .08, a much higher proportion of those drivers have fatal crashes.

## **THE SOLUTION**

Drunk driving, like most other social problems, resists simple solutions. However, there are a number of actions, each of which can contribute toward a reduction of the problem:

- ☐ DWI courts, sometimes called DUI courts, sobriety courts, wellness courts or accountability courts have proven effective in reducing the crime of drunken driving (driving while intoxicated or while impaired). Such courts address the problem of hard-core repeat offenders by treating alcohol addiction or alcoholism.
- ☐ Automatic license revocation appears to be the single most effective measure to reduce drunk driving.
- ☐ Automatic license revocation along with a mandatory jail sentence appears to be even more effective than just automatic license revocation.
- ☐ Impounding or confiscating license plates.
- ☐ Mandating the installation of interlock devices that prevent intoxicated persons from starting a vehicle.
- ☐ Passing mandatory alcohol and drug testing in fatal crashes would promote successful prosecution of drunk and drugged drivers. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has estimated that drugs other than alcohol (narcotics) are involved in about 18% of motor vehicle deaths. These other drugs are often used in combination with alcohol.

## **Driving Under the Influence Doesn't Just Mean Alcohol.**

The National Safety Council (NSC) has launched a Public Service Campaign to educate Americans about the hazards of Drug-Impaired Driving. The public service announcements describe the dangers of driving while impaired by many common prescription and over-the-counter drugs, such as some antihistamines and anti-anxiety medications.

Impairment from alcohol and illegal drugs is a leading cause of car crashes, but impairment can also be caused by many common prescription and over-the-counter medications. Some medications, such as some antihistamines used to treat allergies and anti-anxiety medications, may affect driving skills by inducing drowsiness or excitability or by altering reaction times. Other medications, including some cold and cough medications, sleeping pills and painkillers, can also impair driving skills.

Some of the signs and symptoms of impairment, such as drowsiness, excitability, altered reaction times and altered depth perception. The effects of impairment vary with each person, but can generally be defined as a change in a person's ability to perform routine daily tasks at the normal level of functioning. Impairment can affect driving ability, among other things, but changes can often be difficult to identify. In fact, people may be drug impaired and not realize it.

Americans could protect themselves and others from driving while impaired by following these tips:

1. Talk to your healthcare provider or pharmacist to learn the side effects of any medications you're taking.
2. Carefully read the directions and warning labels of all medications. Ask your healthcare provider about non-impairing alternatives. Never take more than the recommended dose.
3. Don't mix medications without first checking with healthcare provider or pharmacist.

**Don't mix alcohol with medication.**





**The high speeds of controlled-access highways** and the density of traffic on them require a special set of operating rules. Depending on your location, they may be called freeways, expressways, or "the super-slab," but no matter what you call them, the standard operating procedures are the same. For this rule, I'll call them "freeways" for the sake of simplicity.

**First, there are forbidden actions.**

There is **NO STOPPING** on a freeway. This includes the roadway itself, the shoulder, the off and on-ramps, and the median—anywhere on freeway right-of-way. Emergency stops are permitted, but you must take extra care. The shoulder of a busy freeway is a very dangerous place. If you leave an unattended vehicle along a busy freeway, you can expect it to be towed by the authorities. If you are approaching a vehicle stopped along a freeway, or a pedestrian, **PLEASE** change lanes to the left as you pass by. Imagine yourself standing beside the freeway, with traffic less than 3 feet away passing you at 75 mph. Please give them a **WIDE** berth, for their safety.

**It is illegal to back up on a freeway**, and you may not cross a median. If you miss a ramp or need to go back for some reason, you have no choice but to proceed to the next exit and then double back. Crossover roads are for official use and emergency vehicles only. Using a crossover to turn back is an extremely dangerous move, because you must enter the high speed traffic in the left lane.

**A properly designed freeway on-ramp** gives you the space to gain freeway speed before entering the traffic flow. Do not be tentative about accelerating to highway speed—the most significant danger is that caused by disparate vehicle speeds. Do not drive to the end of the ramp and slow to a crawl or stop while waiting for a "break" in traffic. If you accelerate to a proper merge speed, you can merge safely, and the existing traffic will be more likely to accommodate your entry. Traffic merging onto a freeway must yield to traffic already on it, but at the same time, competent, courteous drivers will make room for others to merge. Be careful to always make a visual head-check (not just mirrors!) before changing lanes or merging.

**Be aware that it is often illegal** to cross a freeway "gore area." This is the triangular-shaped zone formed by the single or double white lines of an on or off-ramp as it connects with the through traffic lanes. In some states, signage prohibits crossing a gore area, in others special striping is used (double parallel white lines). In these states, you **MUST** use the lane until it ends; the end marks the beginning of the merging area. Understand that it is **NOT** illegal to cross a single, solid white line—only when they are doubled is crossing them a prohibited act (unless posted otherwise). These are federal rules, adopted by most states.

**Generally, the right lane of a freeway** is for entering and exiting the traffic flow. It's a "staging" lane, for use at the beginning and end of your freeway "run." The middle lanes are for through traffic, and the left lane is for passing. If you are not passing someone, you should not be driving in the left lane. Likewise, unless you are driving at a slower speed or preparing to enter or exit, you should move out of the right lane (this applies to a roadway with more than two lanes, of course).

**If you encounter an emergency vehicle** on a freeway, you should move to the right as much as necessary to let it pass you on the left. You are not expected to pull right and stop as you would on other roads—doing so would be dangerous. Keep in mind that emergency vehicle drivers are trained **NOT** to pass you on the right, so it's important for you to move that direction to allow them safe passage on your left.

**Finally, drive at a safe speed.** Excessive speeding (more than 10 mph faster than traffic flow) or traveling too slowly increases the dangers and difficulty for all. If you view the traffic on a freeway as a giant, single organism, then it becomes apparent that it is the exceptions and differences, especially in speeds, that cause problems. The freeway is one driving arena where it is important to "blend."



# Railroad Crossing

**It's amazing how often** cars race trains to a crossing, in order to just barely cross in front of it. This seems to be a right of passage for young drivers in rural areas as they learn to drive. I have even seen this depicted in Hollywood films, as those "wild and crazy teenagers" are out having fun on Friday night. After a train runs over a vehicle at a crossing, folks often wonder why the car cut in front of the train, when the train was obviously so close and moving so fast. Kids aren't the only ones who do it; impatience on the part of hurried drivers results in hundreds of railroad crossing deaths each year.

**As a train approaches you**, an optical illusion is created that masks the speed of the train -- making it appear to be traveling slower than it really is. The illusion is a result of the train's size and the narrowing aspect of the tracks and train as they recede in the distance. Imagine the horror of a driver and the passengers in a vehicle as they cut in front of a train and suddenly realize they have no time to get out of



its way. The forces of a train/car collision are very close to the same thing as a car running over and crushing an aluminum can!



**Respect the train for what it is** -- an irresistible force and remember that your car is not an immovable object! A train is like an ocean liner -- it may take it more than a mile to stop. Never play chicken with a train by trying to beat it to a grade crossing. Do not drive around lowered gates if the signals indicate a train is coming. Remember to wait after a train passes, until you can clearly see in both directions. Many are

killed when they proceed after a train clears a crossing, and a speeding train on a second set of tracks smacks them from the other direction.

**If your vehicle gets stuck on the tracks**, do not hang around trying to start it, or push it off, if a train is approaching. Get away! If you have to leave your vehicle behind and you know it is going to be hit, remember to run toward the approaching train, not away from it; the debris from a collision will be thrown ahead of the train and it can overtake and kill you.

# How to Avoid Hydroplaning

Driving in the rain can be a harrowing experience, but it becomes considerably more so if you are going too fast. A wedge of water builds up in front of your tires, and if you go too fast, the tires themselves can actually begin spinning on the surface of the water. If you have ever had this experience before, you know that hydroplaning feels like driving on ice--a terrifying situation you want to avoid at all costs.

## ***Prevent the Problem***

### Step 1

Slow down when it starts to rain. High speeds are the number one cause of hydroplaning, and slower speeds can help you avoid the issue before it arises.

### Step 2

Rotate your tires and replace them when the tread becomes worn. Treads are supposed to shunt water away from the wheels--once they wear down, you are far more likely to lose control.

### Step 3

Turn off cruise control at the first sign of rain! This otherwise convenient driving system can be deadly if it continues spinning the tires while you are hydroplaning.

## ***Handle the Problem***

### Step 1

Take your foot off the accelerator as soon as you feel the car hydroplaning. Slowing down in this way is far preferable to slamming on the brakes, which in non-ABS-equipped cars can send you into a deadly skid.

### Step 2

Turn in the direction you are drifting to get the maximum friction from all four tires. If you need to avoid an obstacle, tap the brakes.

### Step 3

Wait until you can feel the road again beneath your car. The effect should be instantaneous and easy to sense, like you have once again landed on pavement.

### Step 4

Proceed with caution and test the brakes periodically to ensure that they aren't flooded.

# How to Safely Navigate Traffic Intersections

Why do so many drivers risk the glares and the honking horns of intersection traffic so often? It truly boggles the mind. Now and then, some drivers are willing to wait until they can safely and completely cross the intersection, but on the whole, that's an infrequent occurrence, especially in downtown areas.

## Step 1

Allow more time. Ever been late to work, a social event, an important family gathering, or any other place where you needed to be there on time? Most of us have, which means we should try to plan our travel times and routes a little better. Sometimes it can't be helped (i.e. road construction, an accident), but when you allow extra time for these unforeseen events and avoid the worry of being late, you lessen the chances of road rage. You can then concentrate more on good driving techniques and being aware of what's going on around you.

## Step 2

At a light, if traffic is heavy and you're not sure if you'll be able to get through the intersection, do not pull up. Just put your ego on hold and wait behind the white line. When traffic ahead of you allows at least one car length BEYOND the intersection, and the light is still green, then you can go. It is sometimes tough to judge this, especially when the intersection is huge, when it's dark, or when you want to turn, but staying outside of an intersection is always safer than being in the middle of the "action."

## Step 3

If you're driving, watch for all kinds of pedestrians, not just those on foot. Also look ahead for skateboarders, rollerbladers, bikers, segway riders, wheelchair users, and others in some mode of personal transport. The law says that pedestrians have the right-of-way, and we should all be mindful of that. Eye contact is key. If the other traveler is not paying attention, be extra cautious.

## Step 4

If you're walking (or rolling), look ahead for drivers, especially if they are coming down a hill. (You'll never know the condition of their vehicle's brakes.) To put it bluntly, it's up to you to avoid the collision, the suffering, the possible police record, and the possible hospital/garage/morgue bills.

## Step 5

Know stop sign etiquette. At four-way stop sign intersections, whoever stops first has the right-of-way. If you both stop at the same time, the driver on the right has the right-of-way. These are easy rules to remember. Sometimes you don't have a stop sign, while the cross traffic does, or vice-versa. In all cases, making eye contact is always safer, just to make sure that intentions are clear.

## Step 6

Look at what's there, not what you THINK should be there. Just because traffic SHOULD allow you to move, doesn't mean it WILL. It's all about safety and courtesy. Don't let today's frantic mindset get you all riled up. Try to relax and [focus](#) when you're driving in congested areas; you'll do much better. Save "high-speed" for the Internet.

**Intersections are one of the most dangerous** areas for any driver. One oft-quoted statistic is that over 80% of all city collisions involving injury or death occur within signal-light (or "controlled") intersections. Adding to the severity of intersection collisions is the average speed through a city intersection is often above 50 mph, and the typical collision is usually a "t-bone," where you are hit on your vulnerable side door.



**Here's how to lessen your risks.** First, as you approach an intersection on a green light, slow down before entering it and make sure to look left-right-left; look left first, look left twice, because the first danger to you is the traffic approaching from your left. If the intersection is a "blind" one - where you can't see the traffic on the cross street until they (or you) are so close as to be an immediate hazard, slow down even more. Do not enter an intersection you have not visually cleared. Some drivers "cover" the brake by moving their foot for a few seconds from the accelerator to a position just above the brake pedal, which helps eliminate the reaction time needed to begin braking.

**The majority of collisions at controlled intersections** happen within 4 seconds of a light change. You don't want to be in the intersection during that 4 seconds. However, if you don't immediately go when the light turns green, people behind you get irritable, yes? Try this... The first thing is make sure you stopped in the right spot. Stop far enough behind the stop line that you can see it on the pavement in front of your car - this normally gives you 10-15 feet of space. When the light turns green, take your foot off the brake and let your vehicle start to creep toward the crosswalk (easy to do with an automatic transmission).

**Look left-right-left**, making sure no one is running the red light and the roadway is clear of pedestrians. By this time, you are in the middle of the crosswalk (if it was clear), or close to the intersection boundary and at least a couple of seconds have elapsed. If the intersection is clear, begin to accelerate. The person behind you knew you saw the light change to green because you started to roll, so they don't usually honk, and you stayed out of the kill zone long enough to make sure it's safe to go.

**There are two major reasons** not to crowd the stop line (or the car in front of you) when stopping for a red light. First, as noted in the last section, it puts you in the right position to momentarily delay your entrance to the intersection when you get the green light. Second, even if you are not the first vehicle in line at the light, leave the same space in front—stop where you can see the rear tires of the next vehicle where they touch the road. If that vehicle stalls, you'll have room to pull out and around it. This also gives you added room in case a vehicle behind doesn't stop in time. If you are watchful, sometimes that few feet is enough for you to pull forward to avoid being rear-ended.

**When making a left turn**, don't turn your wheels in the direction you are turning until it is clear to go. If you are rear-ended while you are waiting, your already-turned wheels may cause your vehicle to veer into the oncoming traffic and a dangerous collision.

**When you are waiting to make a left turn**, your view of oncoming traffic can be restricted. The temptation can be great to go anyway - even though you may not be able to see all the oncoming traffic lanes. Don't do it, ever! It is never safe to make a blind left turn! Finally, if the left-turn lane is crowded, and it looks like it will take more than one light cycle to be able to make a left turn, consider continuing through and make three right turns instead. If you do this on city streets (not private property) it's legal and often quicker when traffic is congested.

# **How to Safely Deal with a Tailgating Vehicle**

One of the most frightening things you can experience on the road is an aggressive driver who is following too close. Your first instinct may be to react counter-aggressively but it may not be the wisest choice to make. Follow these tips to safely deal with tailgating.

Stay Calm If You Find Yourself a Victim of Aggressive Driving.

## **ASSESS YOUR OWN DRIVING**

If you find yourself being tailgated on the highway or side road, check to see what your own driving status is. Are you driving slower than the speed limit? If you've become distracted and find you've been driving especially slow, gradually increase your speed (as long as driving conditions permit) to the speed limit and observe the follower's reaction.

## **ASSESS THE DRIVER BEHIND YOU**

Try to determine if the driver behind you is following closely because they are being aggressive or if they have just inadvertently approached too close. If you are driving below the speed limit, they may have just approached too quickly. Give the driver a few minutes to establish an appropriate distance.

## **REACT APPROPRIATELY**

Your first instinct may be to react with anger and frustration but your best bet is to try to remain calm. If you slow down intentionally or 'brake check' the person behind you, you are likely to cause more damage and frustration that you will solve.

## **CHANGE LANES**

If you are on a two or more lane road and have the opportunity to change lanes, do so. Give the driver behind you a chance to pass you safely and then return to your previous lane.

## **PULL OVER**

If you are on a one lane road and feel it is safe to do so, try pulling over to allow the driver to pass you. When the lane is clear again, pull safely back into traffic and resume your trip.

## **TAKE A BREAK**

If you are feeling threatened by the aggressive driving behind you it may be safest to pull off the road to the nearest public establishment. Keep a look-out for a restaurant or grocery store where you can safely park and wait until the driver is a safe distance away.



**It should make you uncomfortable** if you are driving in other drivers' blind spots! Virtually all vehicles have blind areas—even motorcycles. (Motorcyclists are sometimes limited in how far they can twist their head to look behind them.) Yet, some drivers habitually change lanes without checking their blind areas for other vehicles. It's a good idea to adjust your position relative to other traffic to stay out of other drivers' blind spots

whenever you can.

**Where are your blind spots?** That depends on the vehicle. A car typically has blind areas at the sides near the rear of the vehicle, meaning you cannot see anything in these areas by looking in your correctly-adjusted mirrors. Other vehicles may be blind to anything that is directly behind. Vehicles in which the driver sits very high may have forward-quarter blind spots—they may not be able to see anything low to the ground in front or to the sides near the front.

**It is important to check your mirrors** every 5 to 8 seconds while driving. At the same time, it's not enough *just* to check the mirrors. If you've been driving long, you already know the blind areas on most vehicles are large enough to hide other vehicles. Mirrors also will not reveal a vehicle that is changing lanes from two lanes away. Example: You are driving in the right hand lane of a multi-lane roadway, and signal to change lanes to the left. Another vehicle in the third lane changes lanes to the right. Both of you may be trying to occupy the same place in the second lane. And it is always possible that a lane that was clear of other traffic just a second ago may quickly be occupied—traffic is often fast-moving and fluid—and empty spaces tend to fill up. It is very important to turn your head and look before making a lane change.

**Tractor-trailer rigs have their own particular blind spots.** These trucks are "articulated"—they "bend" in the middle. If you can picture a turning semi from above, as it jackknifes around a corner, you'll see that the side mirrors are the only rearward vision the driver has. As the tractor heads into the turn, the side mirror on the side to which the truck is turning has a view only of the side of the truck's trailer. His other mirror (away from the turn direction) is pointing off to the side, into space. In this situation, the driver cannot see anything happening directly behind him unless he sticks his head out and looks. Also, it is possible to "hide" completely behind the trailer of a large truck. Some drivers do this in order to "draft," using the suction created behind the semi to save on gas. It is not a brilliant idea to drive so close to the rear of a vehicle you can't see around or over when the driver may not even know you are there. When driving near large trucks, always try to make sure you are visible to the driver. If you can see his face in his side-view mirrors, he can see you, too.

**Finally, remember that even parked vehicles have blind areas.** Kids often play around cars. Before you start up and back out, take a quick turn around the vehicle to make sure nothing, living or inanimate, is under or behind your wheels.

# What to Do When Your Brakes Fail

Having your brakes fail while you are driving is a dangerous and horrifying experience, especially when you are traveling on an interstate highway or other high-speed roadway.

The National Safety Council has these tips for coping with brake failure:

- ☐ At the first sign of trouble, try not to panic. Instead, work your vehicle into the right lane and then toward the shoulder or, if possible, toward an exit. If it is necessary to change lanes, do so smoothly and carefully, watching your mirrors and the traffic around you very closely.
- ☐ Use your directional signal to indicate your intentions to other drivers. When you reach the right lane turn on your emergency hazard lights.
- ☐ Let the car slow down gradually by taking your foot off the gas pedal. Simply steer as your vehicle slows and shift the car into a lower gear to let the engine help slow the car.
- ☐ Once off the traveled roadway, gradually apply the parking brake until the vehicle stops. If that brake has also failed, direct the car onto a soft shoulder or rub the wheel against a curb which will help you to slow down. Get the car off the road way and to a safe place to avoid stopping traffic or being involved in a rear-end collision.
- ☐ When safely off the road, put out flares, warning flags or reflective triangles beside and behind your vehicle to alert other drivers; keep your emergency flashers going.
- ☐ You will need professional assistance. Raise your hood or tie something white on the radio antenna or hang from window so police officers or tow truck operators will know you need help. Do not stand behind your or next to your vehicle; if possible, stay away from the vehicle and wait for help to arrive. If this happens at night, stay in your vehicle.

All interstate highways are patrolled regularly. Also, some highways have special “call-for-help” phones and of course if you have a CB radio or cellular phone you can call from your vehicle.

It is unadvisable to walk on an interstate. However, if you can see a source of help and are able to reach it on foot, try the direct approach by walking, but keep as far from traffic as possible.

**A FINAL CAUTION:** Do not attempt to drive your vehicle, no matter how slowly, without brakes! Call for help to get your disabled vehicle towed and then have the brakes repaired by a qualified mechanic.

# Reduce Your Risk of Becoming A Carjacking Victim

Incidences of carjacking and other auto-related crimes have appeared regularly in news stories. Despite the danger, there are measures you can take to guard against crime when you are behind the wheel or walking to your vehicle.

The National Safety Council suggests the following techniques to reduce the chances of becoming a carjacking victim.

- ☐ Be alert while driving. Before leaving, plan a route to avoid dangerous areas. If you need to drive in unfamiliar areas, try not to drive alone. Always drive with your windows up and car doors locked. Regularly check your mirrors and scan ahead for potentially dangerous situations.
- ☐ Be conscious of escape routes while driving alone. Always leave room to maneuver out of the area when you come to a stop, keeping enough distance ahead so that you can see the rear tires of the vehicle in front of you.
- ☐ Carjackers sometimes hit a car from behind and then pull a weapon when the victim gets out to investigate. If you think you have been bumped intentionally, don't leave your car. Motion to the other driver to follow you to the nearest police station. If confronted by a person with a weapon, give up your car.
- ☐ If your vehicle breaks down, pull as far as possible away from moving traffic, tie a white handkerchief around the antenna, close the windows and lock the doors. If anyone approaches to offer assistance, open the window slightly and ask the person to call the police or towing service. Ask the uniformed personnel to show identification.
- ☐ Parking your vehicle. Use caution when you enter or leave a parking lot. Park in well-lit areas where you can see and be seen by others. When getting in or out of your vehicle always be aware of what is going on around you.
- ☐ When returning to your vehicle, approach with caution. Have your keys ready, glance underneath the vehicle and check the front and rear seats. If someone is loitering near your car, avoid them and walk to a place of safety such as a lighted store, house or other building. Call the police.
- ☐ As in every situation, the foremost concern is your personal safety. If you are confronted by a carjacker, don't resist. Hand over your keys and step back from the assailant.

**Remember: a car can be replaced but your life cannot.**



## Safety Tips for Driving with a Trailer

Take time to practice before driving on main roads and never allow anyone to ride in or on the trailer. Before you leave, remember to check routes and restrictions on bridges and tunnels. Consider the following safety tips each time you drive with a trailer.

### General Handling

- Use the driving gear that the manufacturer recommends for towing.
- Drive at moderate speeds. This will place less strain on your tow vehicle and trailer. Trailer instability (sway) is more likely to occur as speed increases.
- Avoid sudden stops and starts that can cause skidding, sliding or jackknifing.
- Avoid sudden steering maneuvers that might create sway or undue side force on the trailer
- Slow down when traveling over bumpy roads, railroad crossings and ditches.
- Make wider turns at curves and corners. Because your trailer's wheels are closer to the inside of a turn than the wheels of your tow vehicle, they are more likely to hit or ride up over curbs.
- To control swaying caused by air pressure changes and wind buffeting when larger vehicles pass from either direction, release the accelerator pedal to slow down and keep a firm grip on the steering wheel.

### Braking

- Allow considerably more distance for stopping.
- If you have an electric trailer brake controller and excessive sway occurs, activate the trailer brake controller by hand. Do not attempt to control trailer sway by applying the tow vehicle brakes; this will generally make the sway worse.
- Always anticipate the need to slow down. To reduce speed, shift to a lower gear and press the brakes lightly.

### Acceleration and Passing

- When passing a slower vehicle or changing lanes, signal well in advance and make sure you allow extra distance to clear the vehicle before you pull back into the lane.
- Pass on level terrain with plenty of clearance. Avoid passing on steep upgrades or downgrades.
- If necessary, downshift for improved acceleration or speed maintenance.

- When passing on narrow roads, be careful not to go onto a soft shoulder. This could cause your trailer to jackknife or go out of control.

## Downgrades and Upgrades

- Downshift to assist with braking on downgrades and to add power for climbing hills.
- On long downgrades, apply brakes at intervals to keep speed in check. Never leave brakes on for extended periods of time or they may overheat.
- Some tow vehicles have specifically calibrated transmission tow-modes. Be sure to use the tow-mode recommended by the manufacturer.

## Backing Up

- Put your hand at the bottom of the steering wheel. To turn left, move your hand left. To turn right, move your hand right. Back up slowly. Because mirrors cannot provide all of the visibility you may need when backing up, have someone outside at the rear of the trailer to guide you, whenever possible.
- Use slight movements of the steering wheel to adjust direction. Exaggerated movements will cause greater movement of the trailer and could result in jackknifing. If you have difficulty, pull forward and realign the tow vehicle and trailer and start again.

## Parking

- Try to avoid parking on grades. If possible, have someone outside to guide you as you park. Once stopped, but before shifting into “Park”, have someone place blocks on the downhill side of the trailer wheels. Apply the parking brake, shift into “Park”, and then remove your foot from the brake pedal. Following this parking sequence is important to make sure your vehicle does not become locked in “Park” because of extra load on the transmission. For manual transmissions, apply the parking brake and then turn the vehicle off in either first or reverse gear.
- When uncoupling a trailer, place blocks at the front and rear of the trailer tires to ensure that the trailer does not roll away when the coupling is released.
- An unbalanced load may cause the tongue to suddenly rotate upward; therefore, before uncoupling, place jack stands under the rear of the trailer to prevent injury.

# OTHER GUIDELINES

## TRINITY UNIVERSITY

### Guidelines For Entering Into Car Rental Contracts

The University's commercial automobile liability policy provides physical damage and liability coverage for rental cars; therefore, it is *not* necessary to purchase the insurance provided by the rental agency. For more information about coverage for leasing automobiles in foreign countries, contact Risk Management at extension 7815 or 7486.

When renting a car, either personal driving or for company business, one assumes four risks:

- \* Damage to the car and loss of use by the rental firm.
- \* Liability from negligence
- \* Contractual liability. Such contractually assumed liability makes you responsible for accidents (as from bad brakes or other faulty maintenance) even without fault on your part.
- \* Voidance of liability coverage purchased from the rental company, if you breach one of the rental agreement conditions (i.e., speeding, unauthorized driver, etc.)

In order to minimize the risks that may exist, the University requires all employees, students or volunteers driving rental cars on official University business adhere to the following guidelines.

These guidelines are intended not only to protect the University and the driver, but also to raise awareness of the liabilities that can be assumed when entering into a car rental agreement.

1) Car rental practices and agreements vary with each company and from one city to another. Since there are no University restrictions as to the selection of car rental firms, it is very **important** to read thoroughly and understand the car rental agreement into which you are entering.

2) The University recommends declining the "collision damage waiver" offered by car rental firms, **except when leasing a car in a foreign country**. The University carries collision coverage on leased automobiles.

3) The University recommends declining the "liability insurance waiver", **except when leasing a car in a foreign country**. This coverage is also provided by the University's commercial automobile liability policy.

4) The University's commercial automobile liability policy does not cover any loss to personal effects or baggage. The renter can purchase this type of coverage, however, it will not be considered a University reimbursable expense.

5) When renting a car, be sure all persons who will be driving the car are listed on the rental agreement and that they comply with the age requirement as stipulated by the rental firm.

6) Follow the required steps outlined by the rental firm in reporting an accident. Most importantly, report the accident to Trinity University Police Department, to Risk Management and to your immediate supervisor **as soon as possible**.

7) Safety considerations must be taken when operating a vehicle. Seat belts are to be worn at all times by the driver and passengers. Consumption of any substance that is known to impair driving immediately prior to the operation of the vehicle or while driving is **strictly prohibited**.

8) Carry the University's auto liability insurance card when using a rental car for University business. This will serve as proof of liability insurance.

## TRINITY UNIVERSITY

### Car Rental Safety Tips

Driving a rented car can be just as easy and safe as driving your own automobile -- with the right preparation. How can you be sure that you're properly prepared each time you drive a rental? Here are some National Safety Council suggestions that can help to put you on the road to car rental success, especially where your safety is concerned.

- 1) Spend a few minutes getting acquainted with your rental car.
- 2) Take a look at the dashboard. Note the location of the speedometer, the temperature gauge, the gas gauge and so on.
- 3) Locate the air conditioner, heater, windshield wiper and washer, defroster, and light switches. Turn them on and off to make sure that you know how they work.
- 4) Test the brakes- -with the engine running- -to get the "feel" of them. Some brakes are "softer" than others, and you don't want to discover this when you're stopping for the first red light. At the same time, get the "feel of the wheel" by testing the "play" in the steering wheel. And make sure the emergency brake works.
- 5) It's a good idea to inspect the rented car to make sure that everything's in working order:
  - ☐ Be sure the tires are properly inflated. Under inflated or over inflated tires can greatly affect your safety, especially at high speeds.
  - ☐ Check the headlights. Know where the switch is even if you'll only be driving during daylight hours -- you might suddenly find yourself driving through a tunnel or facing a weather front in which you would want to turn on your lights.
  - ☐ Test the turn signals, windshield wipers and horn for any operating problems.
  - ☐ Inspect the contents of the trunk. It should have a spare tire and a jack in it. Inquire about the availability of an emergency road kit if you're interested in extra protection or provide your own.
  - ☐ If you need special equipment, such as chains for driving on ice or child restraint seats, be sure to ask for it before you leave the rental lot.
  - ☐ Check for any scratches or dents and report them to the rental agency before you leave the premises. Although these will probably not affect the car's performance, you do not want to be held responsible for them when you return the automobile.
- 6) The differences between the rented car and the car you own may be more significant than simply the layout of the dashboard or the positioning of the gear shift. Following are some examples:
  - ☐ If you're used to driving an automatic and the rented car is a stick shift or vice-versa, it's important to reacquaint yourself with handling the new transmission before you begin driving.

- ☐ Power steering and power brakes require a light touch. If you're not used to driving with them, you may want to get a "feel" for them before moving into heavy traffic.
- ☐ You may be used to a big car and the extra power that it affords you. Or, you may be used to squeezing your little compact into the smallest of parking spaces. In any case, if your rental car is significantly larger or smaller than the car you usually drive, be aware of its limitations.
- ☐ If you're concerned about the differences between the car you rent and the car you own, you might want to request a rental that is similar to the make and model of your own automobile. Most rental agencies will be happy to oblige if they carry that model.

**7) Customize the rented car to your personal driving habits:**

- ☐ Position the driver's seat so that you feel comfortable and at ease behind the wheel.
- ☐ Be sure the headrest is level with the top of your ears.
- ☐ Adjust the rear view and side view mirrors so that they're in the right positions for you.

## Trinity University Van Pre-Trip Inspection Form

*TU's Authorized Driver Policy requires that **a Pre-Trip inspection of the vehicle be completed by the Authorized Driver and returned prior to receiving the keys.** The Authorized Driver will be required to complete a Post-Trip inspection upon return of the vehicle. Failure to abide by the Authorized Driver Policy may result in disciplinary action as outlined in the Authorized Driver Policy and Guidelines.*

Operator \_\_\_\_\_ Department \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Inspection \_\_\_\_\_ Odometer-Reading Pre-Trip \_\_\_\_\_

\*A copy of Trinity's Authorized Driver Policy and a current Insurance Card providing evidence that the vehicle is insured must be in the vehicle. **Initial here to confirm both documents are present:** \_\_\_\_\_

	Satisfactory/Yes	Unsafe/No	Corrected	Comments
Tires	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Muffler	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Condition outside vehicle	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Removable seats are properly installed in the tracks and are in locked position	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Seat belts (accessible/condition)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Brake pedal provides resistance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Parking Brake	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Horn	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Steering	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Windshield Wipers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>All items in Glass and Lights category must be clean AND operational to qualify as satisfactory</b>				
Glass: Windshield	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Mirrors	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Lights: Headlights	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Turn Signals	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Brake Lights	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Flashers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Instrument Panel	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Condition inside vehicle	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Other comments (gallons of gas put in vehicle should be included here if any)

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**PLEASE NOTE ON DIAGRAM**

D= DENT

S = SCRATCH

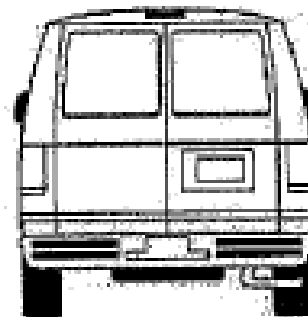
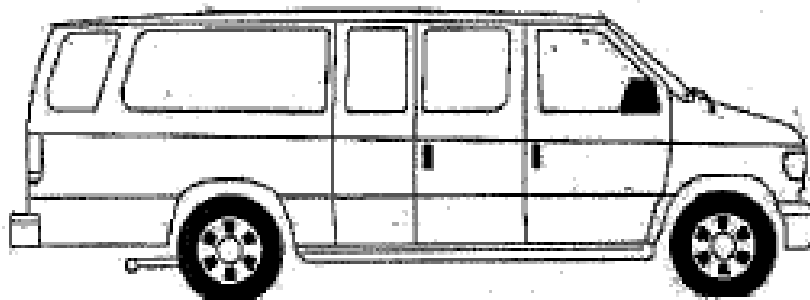
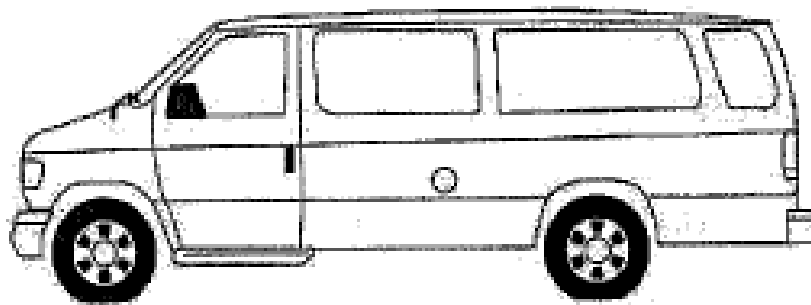
DS = DEEP SCRATCH

GS = GLASS SCRATCH

FB = FRONT BUMPER DAMAGE

RB = REAR BUMPER DAMAGE

PC = PAINT CHIP





## Trinity University Van Post-Trip Inspection Form

TU's Authorized Driver Policy requires that a Pre-Trip inspection of the vehicle be completed by the Authorized Driver and returned prior to receiving the keys. **The Authorized Driver will be required to complete a Post-Trip inspection upon return of the vehicle.** Failure to abide by the Authorized Driver Policy may result in disciplinary action as outlined in the Authorized Driver Policy and Guidelines.

Operator \_\_\_\_\_ Department \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Inspection \_\_\_\_\_ Odometer Reading Post-Trip \_\_\_\_\_

\*A copy of Trinity's Authorized Driver Policy and a current Insurance Card providing evidence that the vehicle is insured must be in the vehicle. **Initial here to confirm both documents are present:** \_\_\_\_\_

	Satisfactory/Yes	Unsafe/No	Corrected	Comments
Tires	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Muffler	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Condition outside vehicle	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Removable seats are properly installed in the tracks and are in locked position	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Seat belts (accessible/condition)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Brake pedal provides resistance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Parking Brake	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Horn	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Steering	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Windshield Wipers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>All items in Glass and Lights category must be clean AND operational to qualify as satisfactory</b>				
Glass: Windshield	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Mirrors	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Lights: Headlights	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Turn Signals	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Brake Lights	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Flashers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Instrument Panel	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Condition inside vehicle	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Other comments (gallons of gas put in vehicle should be included here if any)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**PLEASE NOTE ON DIAGRAM**

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