

City driving

In the city and urban areas, the volume and mix of traffic places many demands on the driver. Road signs can be obscured, new intersections can be confusing and other drivers may behave in unexpected ways. Control is needed to remain calm even when provoked so as to avoid “road rage”. Keeping a close look out is essential for safe driving. This involves knowing what is going on ahead, to the sides and behind your vehicle. Make sure that you emphasise the following practices:

- Anticipate what other road users might do. Look ahead at the traffic scene and be prepared for the unexpected.
- Keep a good look out when going through intersections. There is more to watch out for and more can go wrong.
- Use all of the mirrors, but be aware of the blind spots. Whenever changing lanes or pulling out from the kerb, look quickly over your shoulder to check for other cars or motorcycles - many crashes will be avoided.
- Always signal your moves when turning or changing lanes and make sure it is safe to proceed. Forcing your way into another lane is often a trigger for the other driver to lose self control.
- Act with caution if you see erratic driving near you. This may indicate a driver that is confused or affected by alcohol or drugs.
- Develop an attitude that makes allowance for others when they make mistakes; cooperation with all other road users goes a long way towards greater enjoyment and much safer driving even in difficult situations.

Country driving

Driving on rural roads over long distances can put added stresses on both car and driver. Long trips should be well planned to ensure safe arrival. Fatigue must be recognised as a potential hazard - it is estimated to be a major factor in around 30% of serious crashes. You might be tempted to push yourself to the limits to reach the destination. This increases your risk of a serious crash.

The greater speeds on country roads require that you concentrate fully at all times and avoid being distracted by events both inside and outside the car.

- Maintain a safe distance to the car in front, leaving at least a two second gap. If driving conditions are affected by rain or reduced visibility increase the gap to four seconds.
- Do not overtake unless you are sure the conditions make it safe to do so. There must be enough room to go well past the other vehicle before moving back to the left.
- Unless overtaking, keep to the left lane; as well as being courteous to other drivers; the law requires a vehicle to keep out of the right lane on a multi-lane road with a speed limit over 80 km/h.
- To help prevent drowsiness, fatigue and even falling asleep at the wheel, apply these practices:
 - plan in advance to take regular breaks during the trip such as every two hours
 - start a long trip in the morning after a good sleep
 - avoid driving late at night and very early in the morning, the times when you are normally asleep
 - avoid alcohol and medications that may cause drowsiness
 - use “coffee break” facilities if they are available during your trip
 - take advantage of rest areas located along major routes

Remember that once you are tired, the only effective solution is sleep. A 15 minute powernap can be mentally and physically refreshing. Take a nap whenever drowsiness or sleepiness appear and never delay taking it. The [Victorian State Emergency Services](#) maintain Driver Reviver sites throughout Victoria during major holiday periods.

Weather conditions

Driving in the rain, fog, snow and bright sunlight calls for extra care and can be much more stressful than driving in normal conditions. These factors reduce visibility, increase the risk of skidding and losing control, and can make overtaking extremely dangerous. Fog, ice and snow can create deadly conditions.

- Reducing speed in adverse conditions is advisable and in many cases essential; the margin for error is greatly reduced with less chance of recovering from a mistake or wrong judgement.
- Very heavy rain can have the same effect as fog with less visibility making it harder to judge where you are on the road in relation to other vehicles. Avoid putting yourself in harm's way by driving more cautiously.
- If you see fog and mist ahead, reduce speed before you enter and drive accordingly. In very thick fog, make sure you always know where you are on the road and never drive at a speed that forces you to guess what is ahead. Overtaking must be avoided.
- Drive slowly on ice and snow to retain traction. Braking should be gentle and not left to the last second; use an even pressure on the accelerator to lessen the chances of wheel spin and loss of control.
- Use lower gears than normal to reduce speed and assist in keeping good traction. Both braking and acceleration will be under greater control when driving slowly and carefully.
- If necessary, give way to vehicles going up the mountain as they have more difficulty in starting again if stopped.
- If you do skid off the road into a snow bank, turn on the hazard warning lights and stay in the car until help arrives.
- Beware of blinding glare from sunlight either directly from the sun or reflected from other cars and objects. You may need to reduce speed as well as using aids such as the sun visor and sunglasses.
- Vehicle safety technology such as **Electronic Stability Control (ESC)** can greatly reduce the risk of loss of control crashes associated with ice, snow and rain. For more information on ESC, visit [HowSafelsYourCar](#).

Key safety hints

- Anticipate what might happen by looking ahead and closely observing the movement of other traffic wherever you drive.
- Expect the unexpected in city driving and take extra care when changing lanes, overtaking, going through intersections and driving at night.
- Keep a greater distance to the car in front when driving on rural roads and overtake only when safe - never rush or lose patience.
- Take a 15 minute powernap whenever you feel drowsy or sleepy.
- When driving conditions become difficult or extreme through rain, fog, snow or glare reduce your speed accordingly.

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