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## ow to Get Where You Are Going Safely

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Most vehicle drivers like to consider themselves good, safe drivers, but statistics show that the opposite is true. Much of this overconfidence could be easily overcome if only drivers would obey the most basic rules and regulations of the highway, which are set up by the State Department of Transportation, Division of Motor Vehicles, and state and federal laws.

### Map Reading and Determining the Direction You Wish to Travel

Start by obtaining a good road atlas of the United States. Some of them include parts of Canada and Mexico. The road atlas will contain all major highways, both federal and state. In addition, obtain an individual state map of the area you wish to travel. At many rest stops along Interstate highways, state maps are available free.

A good starting point for travel is to learn basic general directions of the compass. *All* maps indicate north by letter N, with an arrow either above or below the N. Remember as you look at a map that north is up (your head), south is down (your feet), east is to the right (your right arm extended), and west is to the left (your left arm extended).

The United States Interstate Highway System is probably the biggest advancement in surface transportation of the mid and late 1900s. It took 30 years to build (1956-1986) and covers 43,000 miles. All federal highways running north and south are odd-numbered (examples: 21, 77, 79, 119). All highways running east and west are even-numbered (examples: 10, 40, 64, 70). All Interstate route signs are red, white, and blue. All other federal route signs are black and white. Mileage posts read west to east and south to north in each state.

Interstate directional signs for cities are green and white; service area signs are blue and white. Exits are numbered either in numerical sequence or by mileage posts depending on the state you are traveling in. Exit signs are green and white. West Virginia exits are numbered by mileage post. The five Interstates (64, 70, 77, 79, 81) in West Virginia total 515 miles.

### Auto Safety

- The first basic rule is to get acquainted with your auto.
- Learn what it will do and will not do.
- Refresh your memory with basic driving rules learned when you took your driver's test.
- Be aware of weather and driving conditions at all times.
- Periodically check the auto equipment.
- Observe and follow speed restrictions.
- Anticipate potential dangers.
- Yield to a wrongdoer even if you have the right of way.
- Keep conversations to a minimum while driving.
- Do not use cell phones while your vehicle is in motion. Pull off the highway if you must use your phone.
- Never use parking lights for driving. Turn lights on a half-hour before sunset and off a half-hour after sunrise.
- Do not overdrive your headlights, which simply means make sure you can stop within the area lighted by your headlights.
- Use turn signals when turning onto another road, exiting the highway, or changing lanes.
- Keep your windshield and rear window clear. If you're unsure about using wipers, just do it anyhow.

- Keep snow off all glass—windshield, rear window, side windows, headlights, and tail lights. Don't just clear a peephole for driving.
- *Always buckle up*, no matter if you are going two blocks, two miles, or on a long trip.

No Excuses!

### More Safety Tips

- Before backing up, check completely around your vehicle for people or some other obstacle. Do not depend solely on your mirrors.
- When parking on a street, always park in the same direction as the movement of traffic on that side of the street.
- When you leave a parked car, lock it and *always* set the parking emergency brake. When you get out of the car, look around for bicycles, motorcycles, and larger vehicles that may be passing. Yes, look for skate boarders, too.
- Park correctly on hills.
  - Down Hill—Turn wheels to curb.
  - Up Hill with Curb—Turn wheels from curb.
  - Up Hill No Curb—Turn wheels right.
- Give pedestrians their right-of-way when they are crossing a highway at an intersection with a green light or walk signal.
- When driving at less than normal speed of traffic, drive as close a possible to the right edge of the road. If you must drive slower than the designated speed, pull off at the first safe turnout to let faster moving traffic pass. This rule applies when you are on a road with one lane in each direction and overtaking traffic doesn't have a clear lane for passing.

### Following Distances

Most rear-end collisions are caused by following too closely. An easy rule to follow is one car length for every 10 mph of speed. For instance, at 50 mph allow five car lengths. The average car length is 18-20 feet. You must consider the speed of the traffic and the condition of the road, (wet, dry, or icy) to allow yourself enough following distance to stop when necessary.

### Changing Lanes

- Check your rearview mirror and side mirrors.
- Check over your left and right shoulder. Make sure no one is in your blind spot.
- Check for other drivers who may also be moving into the same lane.
- Signal and change lanes.
- *Do not* change lanes in an intersection.

### Passing

- Decide if passing is necessary.
- Make sure you are in a passing zone.

### Practice Defensive Driving

This simply means being prepared by practicing good driving habits. It is just as easy to develop good driving habits as it is to fall into bad habits. Safety techniques begin the moment you step into the vehicle. Remember that an accident can happen in three seconds.

STAY ALERT!

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