

Guide 31: Night Driving Conditions

1. Visibility Limitations

• Vehicle Readiness

- Check and clean headlight lens if grimy. Clean windows and mirrors inside and outside to minimize glare from others' headlights.
- From inside a stopped car, acquire the habit of checking your car's lights each time before you begin to drive at night. Apply the brakes, and look in your rearview mirror to see if there is an equal reflection on either side. Put the signal lights on; see if there are reflections to the front and rear. Put headlights on; see if both lights operate. Check the reflection of the tail lights. Shift car into reverse to check back-up lights. If your car doesn't have back-up lights, apply the brakes to gain rear illumination from the brake lights.
- Keep dash lights low to prevent bright interior lights from affecting your ability to see in a darkened area.

• Driver Readiness

- To see effectively at night, avoid exposure to the sun's rays and wear sun glasses during the day.
- Avoid looking at glaring headlights and other bright lights in order to minimize the recovery time it takes your eyes to readapt to the darkness.
- Depth perception is altered at night. Test your ability to judge distance by taking a guess at what is 15 seconds away. See how accurate your estimates are, compared to those you make during the day.
- At night, you are more likely to be fatigued, which could cause eye fixations. When you feel your eyes getting sluggish, move them more by checking your rearview mirror, then looking out to the target area. When you find yourself not wanting to move your eyes, it is time to find a safe location to pull over and take a break.
- After coping with the day's problems your emotional balloon could be full; be aware, do not explode!

• Environmental Problems

- See how illumination is reduced when there is a new moon as compared to a full moon.
- Change in temperature and early morning dew can result in "black ice" on the freezing road surface.
- Rural roadways may offer no street lighting, making you more dependent upon your headlights.
- Urban areas often have many distracting neon signs that could prevent you from seeing traffic lights and lights from other vehicles.

2. Searching At Night

- Look Beyond Range Of Headlights to see at least 15 seconds ahead.
- Look To Target Area For Clues that will tell you if it is open or closed. Evaluate your targeting path.
- Use High Beam: With No Cars passing you; no cars that you are following; no oncoming cars; and not on an urban (city) roadway.
- Glance To Right When Oncoming Car's lights create a glare problem.
- Look For Cars Without Headlights entering from gas stations and other illuminated parking areas.
- See Curves and Intersections Early (in your target area), to know what decisions you will need to make.

3. Interacting With Others

- Look for Pedestrian Locations. Use association skills to anticipate where pedestrians may enter your path.
- Dim High Beams: when 15 seconds away from oncoming cars; with a car in front; and when being passed.
- Communicate With One Flash of your lights: when 15 seconds away from an oncoming car with high beams on; and to alert a car that you are going to pass. **Do Not Flash Before Passing Trucks.** With their mirrors it becomes blinding and distracting to them.
- Use Other Cars' Headlights to tip you off to curves, intersections and other problems you will approach.

Guide 32: Being Passed and Passing

1. Being Passed

1. Identify Type Of Tailgater

You can best know what to expect from a tailgater ready to pass you if you know which classification of tailgater it is. The "charger" will pass you very quickly at the first opportunity. The "one pacer" will take more time to decide to pass and to execute the pass. The "habitual" tailgater may not attempt to pass you.

2. Plan Ahead For Passing Location

Look ahead to your target area to see what opportunities there will be for someone to pass you.

3. Select The Passing Location

You can select the best opportunity for one to pass you.

4. Adjust Lane Position

When you want to be passed, moving into lane position three will communicate that message to the car in back and give her additional space to separate from the side of your car.

5. Communicate If Needed

The use of the right signal light in conjunction with moving into lane position three will be an effective communication to the car in back.

6. Adjust Speed

The quicker the car in back passes you, the less risk you are exposed to. As you reduce your speed, you make the car passing you complete the pass in a shorter time.

7. Adjust Following Time/Space

As the car completes its pass, there most likely will be less than four seconds of following time from your car to hers. The few moments that it will take for the passing car to accelerate away from your car are very risky moments. The driver that passed may suddenly make a speed reduction, because of a number of circumstances, forcing you to brake to avoid rear ending her. The best habit is to reduce your speed, as needed, for you to control your following time.

2. Passing

1. Why Pass? -

Evaluate Risk vs. Gain

Before deciding to pass, evaluate whether there is anything to gain. Often there is nothing to gain. If you pass one car, only to get to the rear of ten other cars, there is nothing gained by passing.

2. Keep At Least 3 secs Following Time

When you are certain you will be passing, and there will be opportunities available, keep at least 3 seconds of following space. This will give you room to move into the passing lane and have space to return if you detect a problem that was not seen initially.

3. Select Best Passing Location

By keeping at least 3 seconds of following space, you will best be able to search for a low-risk passing location.

4. Mirrors - Head Movement Checks - Signal

Check the outside mirror on the side you will be entering; make an over-the-shoulder or convex mirror check; and put on the signal before moving into the passing lane.

5. Check Front and Side Zones

See at least 20 seconds beyond the vehicle to be passed to see how your front and side zones will be.

6. Avoid Hesitation

7. Accelerate Smoothly

By going 10 mph faster than the passed car, it will take about 10 seconds to complete the pass.

8. Keep Searching Zones

9. See Headlight In Rear View Mirror

Seeing one headlight on the passed car, rather than two, will allow you to get out of the dangerous passing lane sooner and in a safe manner.

10. Return In Lane - Cancel Signal

Avoid a slowdown while reentering the travel lane in front of the passed car, to prevent it from gaining on you.

Guide 33: Responding To Problems

1. Coping With Vehicle Problems

Brake Failure

• Pump Brakes

Pumping the brake pedal may restore brake function by replacing lost hydraulic fluid with air.

• Downshift

Downshifting can allow engine compression to help reduce the car's speed. To downshift, use the open palm method.

• Hold Parking Brake Release Lever

When the parking brake is a foot actuated pedal, the release lever should be held in the released position to allow the pedal to respond to your foot movement.

• Stab Parking Brake

With the release lever held, you can apply a hard braking action to the parking brake. If it is too great and the tires begin to squeal, a spontaneous release of foot pressure will stop the tire squeal and eliminate a potential skidding action. Reapply the brake and release as needed.

• Take Escape Path

Look for a safe path to leave the traffic flow. Then decide on the next course of action — getting the car fixed.

Engine Stalls

• Steer Firmly

When the engine stalls, and you have power steering, you will lose the power assist. You can still steer the car, but it will take two hands and considerable pulling power.

• Open Palm - Neutral

Slap the shift selector into neutral.

• Restart Engine

After shifting into neutral, quickly turn the key to restart the engine without a need to come to a stop.

• Shift To Drive

Drop the shifter into "Drive" and continue on your way.

• Take Escape Path

If the car doesn't start immediately, find an escape while you are able.

2. Coping with Roadway & Driver Problems

• Locate and Park Near (house number is given)

The purpose of this activity is to simulate a problem that will divide your attention between monitoring the traffic scene and looking for an unfamiliar location. You need to first evaluate your targeting path to be certain that you have total control for the two seconds it will take you to search for the house number. Then re-evaluate your targeting path before making another search for a house number.

• Locate and Stop at a Public Telephone, or Mail Box

This is another simulated problem to see how well you are able to divide your searching focus. Remember, never take your glance away from your targeting path for more than two seconds. Always evaluate your targeting path before and after glancing away from it.

• Your Tire Just Blew Out; Where To Pull Over?

During the blowout, hold onto the steering wheel firmly and avoid hard braking action. A dangerous phase of getting a blowout, or flat tire, is selecting a safe location to stop at. You do not need to stop immediately! You can drive slowly, with hazard lights on, for a few miles.

• Emergency Vehicle

Approaching From Rear

You should pull to the nearest side of the road and stop. Check for additional emergency vehicles.

• It's Beginning To Rain, Put Wipers/Headlights On

You should be able to put the wipers and headlights on without looking.

• You Missed Your Turn; Turn Around

Consider your choices for being able to turn around. One such choice, besides making the Intersection Turnabout, is to make a left turn into a public parking lot, allowing for a low-risk right turn coming out of the parking lot.

Guide 33: Responding To Problems

Skid Detection and Correction

The best opportunity to detect and correct a skid caused by loss of traction to the rear wheels is by seeing the front of the vehicle moving off target without delay. The sooner the movement off target is detected, the more time there will be to make a correction. And, the correction will require only a small degree of steering. This exercise will give you practice in detecting a simulated skid and help you train your vision to determine the amount, direction, and speed for a corrective steering action.

If the stop sign is the target then the vehicle is slightly off target to the right. A small steering correction to the left must be made without hesitation to prevent the skid from developing into a larger off-target angle.



If the vehicle gets this far off target, a greater amount of steering is necessary. The faster the vehicle moves off target, the faster and greater the amount of steering must be. To accomplish a large steering input within a short period of time, you will need to use the hand-over-hand steering technique.



Skid Detection, Correction: Coaching Tips

This activity must take place in a vacant parking lot. Tell the teen, "I am going to move the car off target by pulling or pushing the steering wheel from your hands. You are to loosen your grip on the wheel to allow me to move the steering wheel. Keep your head and eyes directed towards the target area. As soon as I move the car off target you must make a corrective action to get it back on target." Make certain there is adequate space in the parking lot. Have the teen begin at 10 mph and only make slight movements off target at first. As success occurs increase speed to 15 mph and move the car more off target up to the transition pegs. When you pull the steering wheel off target, say "your tire just blew out" or "you just hit a patch of black ice" to relate the activity to a situation that may cause this skidding condition.

Skid Correction Actions

- Detect Off-Target, no delay
- Keep Head/Eyes on Target
- Steer back to Target Area
- Stay off gas/brake pedals until car is on target