

Traffic Safety Tips

The Road and Transport Office and ACT Policing want everyone to drive safely and responsibly. Always designate a sober driver, and if you see a drunk driver on the road, call 131444. The public can use the emergency number to report and help the police identify drunk drivers before it is too late.

Our message to everyone is that by obeying some simple rules of the road, the public can greatly reduce the odds of becoming a statistic.

Leave extra time for travel, changing lanes safely, not tailgating, and when approaching the exit, being aware of slow or stopped traffic are just a few examples of how drivers can reduce their chances of being in a collision.

Slowing down, being alert and driving responsibly is critical to keeping motorists, their passengers and everyone on the road safe.

We encourage motorists to obey the rules of the road and use common sense when confronted with a roadside emergency. Motorists should talk only on hands-free mobile phones while driving, avoid stopping or parking in travel lanes or medians, always signal before turning or changing lanes, avoid tailgating and adjust speed for road conditions.

In the event of an emergency, breakdown or minor accident, motorists are advised to travel to the nearest exit or safe location or pull well off to the side of the road and activate the hazard lights while waiting for authorized personnel to arrive to provide assistance. Travelers are also advised to never walk along the roadway.

To reduce the risk of a collision, the following tips could help to save a life:

- Being constantly on guard for potential changes in road conditions;
- Obeying posted speed limits;
- Utilising proper vehicle restraints for all passengers, especially children;
- Abstaining from alcohol or illegal drugs;
- Avoiding behavior such as aggressive driving, road rage and driving while tired or distracted; and
- Ensuring the proper operating condition of a motor vehicle through regular maintenance.

Snow Safe:

1. Get your car services now.

No one wants to break down in any season, but especially not in cold or snowy winter weather. Start the season off right by ensuring your vehicle is in optimal condition.

- Visit your mechanic for a tune-up or other routine maintenance.
- Have your entire vehicle checked thoroughly for any leaks, bad hoses, or other needed part repairs or replacements.
- If you plan to use snow tyres, have them installed now. For existing tyres, check to ensure they're properly inflated (as recommended by your vehicle

manufacturer), the tread is sufficient with no uneven wear, and that the rubber is in overall good condition. Note that tyre rubber starts to degrade after several years, and tyres need to be replaced even if they have not seen much wear.

2. Get your car battery checked ensuring your vehicle is in optimal condition.

When the temperature drops, so does battery power. Plus, it takes more power to start your vehicle in cold weather than in warm. Find out if your battery is up to the challenges of winter:

- Have your mechanic check your battery for sufficient voltage.
- Have the charging system and belts inspected.
- If necessary, replace the battery and/or make system repairs.
- Visit your mechanic for tune-up or other routine maintenance.
- Have your entire vehicle checked.

3. Check your cooling System

When coolant freezes it expands. Such expansion can potentially damage your vehicle's engine block beyond repair. Don't let this happen to your vehicle this winter!

- Make sure you have enough coolant in your vehicle and that it's designed to withstand the winter temperatures you might experience in your area.
- A 50/50 mix of coolant to water is sufficient for most regions. See your vehicle owner's manual for specific recommendations.
- Thoroughly check the cooling system for leaks or have your mechanic do it for you.
- If your system hasn't been "flushed" (draining the system and replacing the coolant) for several years, have it done now. Over time, rust inhibitors in anti-freeze break down and become ineffective. Coolant also needs to be refreshed periodically to remove dirt and rust particles that can clog the cooling system and cause it to fail.
- Use high-quality, "no-freeze" fluid.
- Buy extra to keep on hand in your vehicle.

4. Check your windshield wipers & defrosters

Safe winter driving depends on achieving and maintaining the best visibility possible.

- Make sure your windshield wipers work and replace worn blades.
- If you live in an area that gets a lot of ice, consider installing heavy-duty winter wipers.
- Check to see that your window defrosters (front and rear) work properly

Bicycles

There are many bicycles on today's roads. More people are using bicycles to get around for commuting, fun or for exercise. Some people use bicycles to help save natural resources like oil and gas.

Motorists should remember these tips when sharing the road with a cyclist:

- A cyclist riding their bicycle is considered by law to be a vehicle. When a cyclist has stopped and remains astride their bicycle at an intersection and/or for a traffic signal, they are to be treated as a vehicle waiting for their turn to proceed.
- If a cyclist dismounts completely and is walking beside and pushing their bicycle, then they are considered by law to be a pedestrian.
- Many children riding bicycles on the street may lack the necessary training and skills for safe cycling. They may not be aware of all dangers.
- Be alert for small children on oversized bicycles. This may increase the likelihood of loss of control.
- When passing a cyclist, go around them like you would any other vehicle. Leave lots of room.
- When you are about to make a left turn, do not pull up beside a cyclist and then turn directly in front of them and cut them off.
- When pulling away from the curb, always check for cyclists who may be trying to pass you.
- When parked at the curb, always check for cyclists before you open your vehicle door. It is the driver's responsibility not to open the vehicle door into traffic.
- Do not follow too close behind cyclists. They do not have brake lights to warn you when they are stopping.
- Cyclists are required to ride as close as practicable to the curb, however, they may need to ride further out when they have to steer away from drainage grates, pot holes, debris, loose gravel or sand, wet or slippery surfaces, rutted or grooved pavement and even dogs. Be aware of the roadway conditions that may affect a cyclist.
- Do not sound your horn unnecessarily when you are overtaking a cyclist. It may startle them and cause them to lose control. If you feel that you must use your horn, tap it quickly and lightly while you are still some distance away from the cyclist.
- Cyclists should remember that the law requires that cyclists or passengers on a bicycle wear an approved bicycle helmet.

Motorcyclists:

Respect the motorcyclist: The motorcyclist is a vehicle with all of the privileges of any vehicle on the roadway. Give the motorcyclist a full lane of travel.

Look Out: Look for the motorcyclist on the highway, at intersections, and when a motorcyclist may be changing lanes. Clearly signal your intentions.

Anticipate a motorcyclist's manoeuvre: Obstructions (debris, potholes, etc) that you may ignore or not notice can be deadly for a motorcyclist. Predict evasive actions.

Allow plenty of space: Don't follow a motorcycle too closely. Allow enough room for the motorcyclist to take evasive actions

More information on Traffic and Road Safety can be found at the following websites:

- <http://www.tams.act.gov.au/move>
- <http://www.roads.act.gov.au>

Acknowledgement: <http://www.saferoad.com>

Source: ACT Policing