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Summer driving safety

Often, when we think of adverse driving conditions we think of snow, sleet, ice, and high winds.

Though you do not deal with these types of conditions during the summer, there are a whole different set of issues you face during the warmer months of the year. This includes the effects of heat on the road and your vehicle, road construction, and vacationing drivers.

The effect of heat on the road

Summer heat wreaks havoc with road conditions:

- Heat can cause asphalt to soften and bleed making roads slick. Tars or oils often rise to the road's surface, causing slippery spots.
- "Blow-ups" can occur when joints and connections at bridges or intersections expand from the heat, creating holes in the roadway.
- The mirage effect can make it look like there's a pond on the road ahead. Heat from the road surface has warmed the air above it, changing its density and bending the light to cause this mirage.



The Effect of heat on your vehicle

Hot weather creates challenges for your vehicle and your load. Pay extra attention to the following when performing inspections:

- **Tires.** Tires should be inspected regularly. Check tire mounting and inflation. Air pressure increases with temperature, but do not release the tire's pressure. It will drop as the tire cools off. If you have to change a hot tire, never place it in your vehicle's spare rack unless it has cooled off because a tire fire could result.
- **Engine oil.** Make sure your vehicle has the right amount of oil. Monitor the oil temperature gauge while driving to make sure it is within the proper range.
- **Brake fluid level.** Maintain proper fluid levels.
- **Engine coolant.** Make sure that the engine's cooling system has enough water and antifreeze before starting out. While on the road, monitor the water temperature and coolant temperature gauge periodically, making sure it is in the normal range. Never remove the radiator cap when the engine is hot because coolant is under

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Summer driving safety *(continued from page 1)*

pressure and steam released upon opening can burn.

- **The Load.** Be sure to check with your dispatcher about the effect of heat on your load, especially if that load is a liquid or a hazardous material. At higher temperatures, loads can change in viscosity and react differently.
- **Engine belts.** Check belts for cracking, signs of wear, and proper tension.
- **Hoses.** Check coolant hoses for cracks, breaks, or wear. A broken hose can lead to engine failure or an engine fire.
- **Batteries.** Check to be sure connections between the battery terminals are tight and free of corrosion.
- **Emergency kit.** Include items such as a flashlight, fire extinguisher, flares, a blanket, and some basic tools. Keep extra water, snacks, an ice pack, sunscreen, and band-aids on hand.

If any of these items are not 100 percent satisfactory, contact your dispatcher or mechanic before driving.

Road construction

Summer is the prime season for roadwork throughout the country. Additional caution and safe driving practices are extremely important when driving through work zones.

Pay attention. Eliminate all activities that can be a distraction.

Don't tailgate. Maintain a safe following distance by leaving plenty of room between vehicles in case sudden braking is necessary.

Don't speed. As well as being one of the major causes of work zone crashes, the majority of states impose enhanced fines for speeding in work zones.



Merge as soon as possible. Don't wait until the last minute to merge.

Be patient. Slow down and pay attention to what is going on around the vehicle.

Expect the unexpected. Normal speed limits may be reduced, traffic lanes may be changed, and people may be working on or near the road.

Vacationing drivers

Summer means sun, fun, and for many Americans that once a year family vacation/road trip. Though you share the road with four-wheelers on a continual basis, summertime brings out a different set of hazards and concerns



that require you to pay even more attention than usual and use all of your defensive driving skills.

The over-packed vehicle. We've all seen it — the boxes, coolers, and clothes covering a vehicle's back window and in some cases side windows as well. Assume the driver of this vehicle is unable to see out that back and/or side window. Leave plenty of following distance and pass with care.

Towing toys. For many people, a trip to the cottage, lake, or resort can mean towing a boat, camper, or trailer. This can also mean a driver who is unfamiliar and/or inexperienced with operating a four-wheeler with a towed unit — testing your defensive driving skills.

When approaching this type of highway situation, allow for plenty of following distance, watch for swerving of the towed unit and the potential for over-correcting by the driver, and be alert to what seems like sudden slowing, stopping, or turning as the light systems on some towed units may not operate as they should.

Unfamiliar territory. You need to be on the lookout for tourists when traveling through known vacation areas.

Those who are unfamiliar with the area can unintentionally pose a hazard, such as changing direction or slowing/stopping without warning.

You should watch for vehicles driving slowly, frequent use of brakes, or drivers looking at signs or maps. Additional signs of a tourist include car-top luggage, trailers, and out-of-state license plates.

Quitting smoking can be tough, but worth the effort

A person who smokes becomes dependent on nicotine, a drug that can be as addictive as cocaine or alcohol.



Nicotine occurs naturally in tobacco and impacts the body in a number of ways. It activates the brain's reward pathways, and may lift a person's mood, reduce appetite, and make a person more alert. However, these

effects are often followed by a feeling of depression and fatigue, leading to the desire for more nicotine.

A person who stops smoking may feel irritable, anxious, or even angry, and may have trouble thinking. In addition, appetite may increase and sleep can be disrupted.

While nicotine withdrawal can be uncomfortable, smokers can remind themselves that effects of withdrawal are temporary. The worst physical symptoms last a few days to a few weeks.

The benefits of quitting, however, will endure. Health milestones after you quit include:

- Within 20 minutes, your heart rate and blood pressure drop.
- Within 12 hours, the carbon monoxide level in your blood stream drops to normal.
- Within 3 months, your circulation and lung function improves.
- After 9 months, you will cough less and breathe easier.
- After 1 year, your risk of coronary heart disease is cut in half.
- After 5 years, your risk of cancer of the mouth, throat, esophagus, and bladder are cut in half.



- After 10 years, you are one-half as likely to die from lung cancer, and your risk of larynx or pancreatic cancer decreases.

After 15 years, your risk of coronary heart disease is the same as a non-smoker's risk.



People who quit also enjoy increased energy and an improved sense of taste and smell.

Furthermore, people who quit smoking are more productive and miss fewer days of work compared to current smokers, according to a study by the National Center for Biotechnology Information.

To help make the first smokeless weeks more bearable, those who are quitting can use medication, counseling, or other methods to help ease nicotine withdrawal symptoms.

Nicotine addiction can be powerful, and quitting may require several attempts. However, the addiction can be overcome. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention notes that today there are more former smokers than there are current smokers.





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How much water should I drink?

*"Do not dwell
in the past,
do not dream
of the future,
concentrate
the mind on
the present
moment."*

Buddha
563 - 483 BC



Sweating keeps you cool, but it can lead to dehydration.

While it's important to keep yourself hydrated, there are no hard and fast rules about how much water you should drink each day.

Generally speaking, a good rule of thumb is to aim for eight 8-ounce glasses each day. More water will be needed if you're physically active or in a hot environment.

Keep in mind that about 20 percent of our water intake comes from the food we eat. Foods like soup, melon, and tomatoes are high in water content, and this fluid counts toward our daily water intake.

Drinking enough water is important, as it helps keep your body temperature normal, cushions joints, gets rid of bodily waste, and reduces the risk of kidney stones. In addition, it helps you feel full between or during meals.

If you're having a hard time convincing yourself to drink more water, consider adding slices of lemon, lime, or even cucumber to your water to add a little flavor.



Replace fluids

When you're exercising or working outdoors on a hot day, your temperature rises. The body cools itself down by sweating and increasing blood flow to the skin.

While sweating cools you down, it also means that fluids are leaving your body. When they're not replaced, you become dehydrated.

Dehydration can lead to muscle fatigue and loss of coordination, as well as heat illnesses such as heat exhaustion or heat stroke.

To avoid this issue, always bring water with you when exercising or working outdoors on warm days. Try to drink about 8 ounces every 20 minutes.

If you become dizzy or lightheaded, or feel very tired, it's time to take a break.

