

Safe Driving Guidelines

Guidelines provided below are to assist staff in accessing their personal circumstances before and during travelling in a motor vehicle.

All drivers are to have due regard for the requirements of the NSW Roads & Traffic Act, the OHS Act 2000 and DET's Motor Vehicle "Best Practice Guide".

Before Driving a Car

- Plan your trip - shorter trips
- For short trips, take the most efficient path in accordance with expected traffic conditions.
- For longer trips take appropriate rest breaks.

Plan your trip before you start and then drive your plan. Consider route, distance, rest breaks, time allowed, weather conditions, and terrain. Taking 'short cuts' often will take the driver off the main roads onto roads that are not in safe conditions and are more isolated. Plan travel time to allow main roads to be used.

The usual approval for travel should be put through the Team/Branch Manager.

Hazards & Hazard Perception

Hazard perception skills used by good drivers to stay safe are:

- Keep a safe distance from other vehicles
- Select safe gaps when turning, crossing traffic or changing lanes
- Scan for hazards ahead, behind and to the side.

Driving Times

Consider the timeframe you intend to be on the road. DET employees are not expected to drive for more than 6 hours in any one-day. Including rest breaks every two hours as recommended by the RTA this would equate to approximately an 8-hour day. If an employee is required to travel a distance that would result in driving more than the recommended time, discussion with your manager should take place to identify alternate arrangements. The alternatives could include travel by train, air flight or sharing the driving. The NSW RTA recommends a minimum rest break of 20 minutes.

Windscreens

Ensure windscreens and windscreen wipers are clean. This is of greater importance during the spring and autumn months when the sun is low on the horizon while staff are more regularly travelling to and from a place of work. This increases the difficulty of judging location and distance on the road and increases the risk of accidents. Wipers should be renewed regularly for optimum performance.

Equipment Within the Vehicle

The first option for storing equipment is that it should be locked in the boot of sedans. If the vehicle is a station wagon it should be locked behind the cargo barrier and under the cargo blind in the loading bay.

Equipment laying on the back seat of the vehicle or on the 'parcel' shelves can become dangerous missiles when the vehicle is involved in an accident.

If equipment must be placed inside the passenger compartment of the vehicle the safest position is on the back seat floor area ensuring that the equipment cannot move forward along the floor under the pedals of the driver. Bulky equipment should be secured with a seat belt.

The installed cargo barrier and cargo blind should not be removed from station wagons.

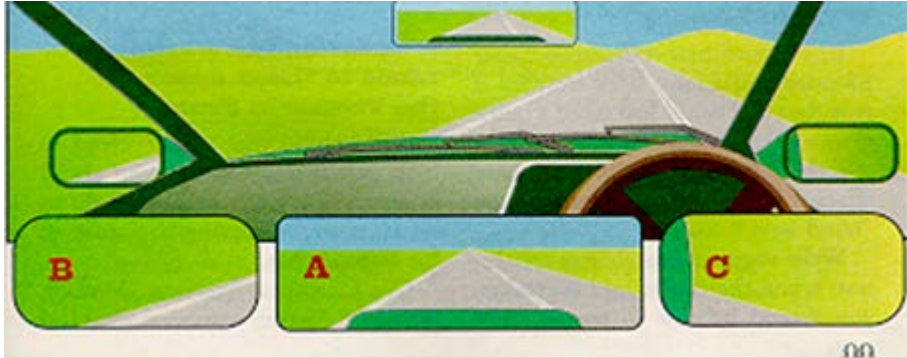
Setting Your Sights

To eliminate dangerous blind spots the rear and side mirrors need to be adjusted to cover all rear angles.

A: First set the centre mirror to get a good view directly behind.

B: Adjust the left mirror so that the inside edge of the mirror lines up with the left side of the view through the centre mirror.

C: Set the right mirror with its inside edge lining up with the right side of the centre of the centre mirror. Each time the vehicle is used check to ensure the mirrors have not been repositioned. (See illustration below)



Use of Headlights

Headlights must be switched on during daytime and night time. Statistical evidence shows that headlights switched on during the day make your vehicle more visible, therefore reducing the risk of accidents.

Correct & Comfortable Seats

It is important your driving position is as comfortable as possible. The correct seating position also assists in controlling and operating the vehicle effectively. For good driving posture:

- Adjust your seat to support your legs, with knees slightly bent so you are not able to place your legs into a straight position when fully stretch out.
- Adjust your steering wheel so there is a slight bend in the elbows when your shoulders are against the seat.
- To be correctly balanced in your seat, sit with your legs apart,
- Place your left foot on the footrest to assist your balance and stability.
- The position of your hands on the steering wheel should allow you to make a full turn of the steering wheel. The suggested position is quarter to three on the wheel.
- The headrest should be positioned so that its centre is even with your ears. This reduces the risk of whiplash in the event of an accident.

Medication & Driving

If you are on medication, discuss the possibility of the medication affecting your driving with your doctor or pharmacist. This is particularly important if you are on more than one medication. Receiving a holistic picture of possible effects on your driving will enable an assessment to be made of your reaction to the medication. As you may react to some medication differently than other people "listen" to your own body.

Guidelines Whilst Driving

Three Second Cushion

Keep a three-second "safety cushion" between you and the car in front of you. This will ensure the greater the speed you are travelling the greater the distance from the car in front.

No Such Thing as Safe Speeding

Adjust your general speed to suit the environment. If your vehicle needs to slow down for the conditions ahead, do so before reaching those conditions. If you decide the conditions allow for increased speed and it is within the speed limit, do so when you enter those conditions.

There is no such thing as safe speeding. Here are some helpful tips:

- It is recommended that your speed is at least 10km/h below the speed limit when travelling in wet or unfavourable conditions.
- There is an increase in relative stopping distance of 16 metres between a vehicle travelling at 60 km/h and one travelling at 72 km/h. The vehicle travelling at 72 km/h will still be travelling at 51 km/h at the point the slower car would have stopped.
- It takes about three-quarters of a second to see a hazard and make a decision (e.g. brake or don't brake). It takes another three-quarters of a second to take some sort of action (e.g. get your foot from the accelerator to the brake). This means that about 1.5 seconds have passed before you even start braking. At 60 km/h you will have travelled about 25 metres in this time.
- When speed increases from 40 to 60 km/h, speed goes up 50% while the energy released in a crash more than doubles.
- Speeding is related to 38% of fatal crashes.
- When overtaking, remember that it takes 750 metres of clear road to do so safely while travelling at 100km/h. It is also illegal to travel greater than the posted speed limit to overtake another vehicle.

Work in With Other Drivers

It is important that drivers "work in" with other road users and co-operate with them to keep the traffic flowing within the road rules. Equally it is important that other drivers are not surprised by your actions. Ensure that other road users do not have to change their driving actions to fit in with you.

Stopping Vehicle in Traffic

It is good practice when stopping the vehicle in traffic to ensure you are able to see the rear tyres of the vehicle stopped in front. This provides a safety cushion in case of rear end collision.

Travel in Day Light Hours

It is safer to travel in daylight hours where possible. Statistics indicate that the most likely time to be involved in a rear end crash is between 5pm and 8pm on weekdays.

Be Alert

Always be alert, as driving demands your full attention - the surrounding environment such as congested traffic, large trucks, B-doubles, B-triples, domestic animals and wildlife are but a few challenges that require your full attention. Be aware and ready to respond to the unexpected as you do not know what the other driver may do.

Using ABS Brakes

DET vehicles have ABS brakes (anti-lock brakes); therefore you should maintain steady pressure on the pedal when braking to keep the system working. Never pump the brake pedal if you have ABS.

Anticipation Zone

Drive to the conditions of the road and weather. It may be necessary to stop the vehicle until conditions improve. A good habit is to scan well ahead to ensure a large "anticipation zone" and have the big picture of what is occurring around you. It is recommended that a driver have a 12 second anticipation zone ahead to allow for hazard spotting. In a 60km/h zone it means looking up to 200 metres ahead and at 90km/h zone up to 300 metres ahead.

Smart Scanning

Smart scanning involves sorting or filtering what is important for your safety. Some of the ways to make your scanning smarter involves:

Look for change - Your vision is designed to pick up movement and change, not what stays the same. This means that moving hazards may be easier to spot than stationary ones like road works or parked vehicles. This may cause you to become distracted by a moving hazard resulting in missing a stationary one of more immediate concern.

A Hazard Perception Action Plan - The Plan Involves:

- Seeing road hazards (e.g. pedestrian waiting to cross the road),
- Think about what might happen (e.g. will the pedestrian walk in front of your vehicle),
- Think about possible solutions (e.g. slow down, change lanes or increase space between your vehicle and pedestrian, sound horn).
- Do something to remain safe (e.g. slow down and give pedestrian more space).

Listening for hazards - Listening can also help detect hazards. Examples are sirens of emergency vehicles approaching or a motorcycle approaching the vehicle. To assist you in listening it is advisable not to have the radio or stereo too loud while driving.

Checking your mirrors every 8 to 10 seconds is recommended, as it is as vital to know what is going on behind you as it is in front of you.

Assess the Conditions

Precautions need to be taken when driving in isolated or dirt roads and in rain, fog and snow.

- Travelling in isolated areas present new dangers. Assess the area and the clients to be met. Is there communication available in case of emergencies? Is there more than one person expected at the meeting? Are these persons known? Inform a responsible person (DET staff, police) of your location of travel and expected time of return.
- Travel on unsealed roads is best avoided as the driver is usually in a more isolated area, the conditions of the roads are not as safe, increasing the risk to the driver and more damage to the vehicle can be expected.
- Before travelling on roads that are fog or snow bound, consider an alternate route or delay your trip. Assess the conditions before continuing on and drive to the conditions.
- Roadwork's can be a dangerous area for yourself and the roadworker. Conditions often encountered include slow moving heavy trucks, machinery, rough surfaces, no lane markings and workers on or near the road. Scan ahead for roadwork signs and obey the speed limits or directional movement of traffic. Scan for hazards on the way through the work site and give workers and machinery a wide berth.
- The unexpected can always occur. The road system and road user is not perfect and therefore some road users will not do what you expect them to do. Applying the above information on smart scanning will assist you avoid the unexpected along with allowing as much time between yourself and road circumstances as possible.

Travelling Through a Curve

While approaching a curve and the vehicle is travelling too fast, brake firmly then ease off the brake as you go into the turn. If you are already in the turn ease off the accelerator and brake gently. Try to look and steer toward the end of the curve.

Travelling in Snow Country

Travelling in snow country has its own requirements and dangers. Follow these suggestions in putting on snow chains:

- Snow chains must be fitted to the driving wheels of the vehicle.
- For front wheel drive vehicles fit chains to the front wheels
- For rear wheel drive vehicles fit chains to the rear wheels
- For four-wheel drive vehicles fit chains to front wheels.

In cold climates, shaded areas can develop icy surface conditions on the road known as black ice. Slowing down is essential to control the vehicle under these circumstances.

Control Emotions

Stop your emotions from interfering with safe driving.

Emotions such as aggression, depression, unhappiness, frustration, impatience and anxiety can have a negative affect on your driving.

A useful technique recommended is to talk yourself through it and work out your circumstances. Ask yourself if you are benefiting from letting your emotions affect your driving or if it is having an adverse affect on your safety.

Vision Difficulties

Common vision problems can affect a person's driving ability. Some of these problems are:

- Sensitivity to bright light
- Difficulties in focusing
- Nearsightedness
- Farsightedness
- Decrease in depth perception
- Decrease in peripheral vision
- Cataracts
- Glaucoma
- Macular
- Degeneration of the eyes.

Encountering Large Vehicles

Large commercial vehicles are regularly encountered on the roads such as semi-trailers, B-doubles and B-triples. A truck or a bus can be up to 3 times longer than your vehicle. Semi-trailers can be up to 5 times longer and road trains up to 9 times longer and along with other vehicles, present challenges to drivers.

Drivers need to display patience when following these vehicles allowing extra room when turning and stopping. It is recommended that at least 1.5 km of open road be allowed when overtaking a road transport vehicle.

Fatigue

Medical research has defined fatigue in a number of ways including:

- Decreased alertness
- Decreased vigilance/watchfulness
- Increased information-processing and decision-making time
- Increased reaction time
- More variable and less effective control responses
- Decreased motivation
- Decreased psycho physiological arousal - measured by changes in body temperature, brain waves, heart action and nervous system activity.

Symptoms of Fatigue

Symptoms of fatigue that should alert drivers to take preventive action include:

- Not keeping the vehicle on a steady speed or course
- Constantly adjusting ventilation and/or radio/tape/CD volume
- Moving around in your seat
- Double vision and sore eyes
- Obvious signs of tiredness (yawning)
- Becoming irritable

- Difficulty in keeping eyes opened
- Difficulty in keeping head up
- Becoming impatient
- When discomfort becomes noticeable
- When loss of concentration occurs
- Repeated lane drifting
- Don't remember driving the last few kilometres
- Aches & pains

The Myths on How to Avoid Fatigue

The following behavioural techniques used to avoid fatigue are considered myths:

- Increasing the volume of the car stereo
- Rolling down the window
- Turning on the air conditioning
- Chewing gum
- Slapping/pinching self
- Screaming

Avoid Fatigue

Drivers can avoid fatigue on long trips by taking the following action:

- Taking rest breaks every two (2) hours or 200kms.
- Pull over and stop when drowsy
- Do not drink alcohol before you drive
- Do not fix on or stare in one area for long periods
- Moving your head and eyes frequently will reduce fatigue and provide a better overview of the driving environment.
- Share the driving - During a long distance trip the passenger also becomes fatigued without actually driving. Note: Changing drivers without taking a rest break may lead to fatigue for the driver and the passenger.

Alcohol

NSW legislation requires that drivers stay under the blood alcohol level of 0.05. For young drivers and commercial drivers the blood alcohol level is under 0.02 which in effect means no alcohol consumption.

It is inappropriate for DET staff to come to work with a risk of being under the influence of alcohol.

The blood alcohol level peaks 20 to 60 minutes after the consumption has ceased. It takes one hour for your body to metabolise each standard drink. Depending on the amount consumed employees may not be in a position to report for work if the blood alcohol level is still too high. Officers who are on after hour duty roster will need to be confident that their blood alcohol level is under 0.05 before responding to an urgent call out.

Pre-Driving Risk Assessment Tool to Use a DET Car

Driver's Name: Team:

Date:

Potential Risk Answers

What are the Risks Control Measure(s)

Are you on medication that may negatively influence your driving?

Have you consumed alcohol that puts you over 0.02?

Can travel take place in daylight hours?
Have you accessed the road and weather conditions?
Have you had sufficient sleep to drive safely?
Do you feel fatigued before you start driving?
Do you have vision aids with you?
Is the vehicle appropriate for the task?
What distance will be travelled?

How many rest breaks are planned?
Have the windscreens been cleaned?
Do the windscreen wipers need replacing?
Has all equipment been placed in the boot or cargo compartment?
Has all equipment within the vehicle been placed in a safe position?
Is the lumbar support correctly adjusted?
Has the seat been adjusted to support your legs
Have you adjusted the rear & side mirrors to cover blind spots?
Is the driving wheel adjusted to your driving position?
Has the headrest been adjusted so its centre is even with your ears?
Is your phone's hands-free kit fitted within easy reach of your normal driving position?
Before starting to drive have you turned on the headlights even during daylight hours?