

STAY ALIVE  
FOR THE

# DRIVE



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SECRETARY OF STATE



Illinois Department  
of Transportation  
Division of Traffic Safety

[WWW.CYBERDRIVEILLINOIS.COM](http://WWW.CYBERDRIVEILLINOIS.COM)

# STAY ALIVE FOR THE DRIVE

According to the National Traffic Safety Council, more than 41,000 people lose their lives in motor vehicle crashes annually, and more than 2 million more suffer disabling injuries. The triple threat of high speeds, impaired or careless driving and not using passenger restraints threatens every driver, regardless of how careful or how skilled.

As Secretary of State, traffic safety is my top priority. That is why my office has partnered with the Illinois Department of Transportation to provide this Stay Alive for the Drive booklet. In it you will find important information about aggressive driving, child passenger safety, sharing the road with others, carjacking prevention and other safe-driving tips.

I encourage you to read this booklet thoroughly and share it with others. By being a responsible, defensive driver, you will do your part to improve traffic safety and Stay Alive for the Drive.

*Jesse White*

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## Be a Defensive Driver

The National Traffic Safety Council suggests the following guidelines to help reduce your risks on the road:

- **Secure yourself and all passengers.** Safety belts save thousands of lives each year. Don't start the engine without making sure each passenger is secured in the vehicle, including children and pets. Lock all doors.
- **Be alert, cautious and responsible.** Be aware of your surroundings. Anticipate other drivers' actions and always err on the side of caution.
- **Follow the rules of the road.** Be respectful of other motorists. Don't contest the right-of-way or try to race another car during a merge.
- **Monitor your speed.** Driving too fast or too slow increases the likelihood of a collision.
- **Don't follow too closely.** Always use a 3-second or more following distance.
- **Don't drink and drive.** Alcohol is a factor in nearly half of all fatal motor vehicle crashes. If you plan to drink, designate a driver who won't drink.
- **Avoid impaired drivers.** If you notice a vehicle straddling the center line, weaving, making wide turns, stopping abruptly or responding slowly to traffic signals, the driver may be impaired. Steer clear of the vehicle by pulling off the side of the road or exiting at the nearest intersection or exit. If it appears that an oncoming car is crossing into your lane, pull over, sound your horn and flash your lights. If you encounter a suspected impaired driver, safely pull off to the side of the road and contact police immediately.

## Child Passenger Safety

Children under age 8 must be secured in an appropriate child restraint system, which includes infant seats, convertible seats (rear-facing for infants and forward-facing for toddlers), forward-facing only seats (toddlers) and booster seats used with vehicle lap/shoulder belts.

Always follow the safety seat manufacturer's instructions for height and weight guidelines. Children ages 8 and older are required by law to wear safety belts. For their ultimate safety, it is recommended that all children ride in the back seat.



**For more information on child passenger safety, visit [www.cyberdriveillinois.com](http://www.cyberdriveillinois.com) or call 866-247-0213.**

## Avoid Aggressive Driving

If you have ever been passed on the wrong side, tailgated, cut off or hemmed in by another vehicle, you have been the victim of an aggressive driver.

### Be a cautious and considerate driver:

- Plan ahead and allow enough time for delays.
- Keep your emotions in check. Don't take your frustrations out on other drivers.
- Focus on your own driving. Yelling, cursing, pounding on the steering wheel and honking your horn won't make traffic move any faster.

### Avoid aggressive drivers:

- Don't create a situation that may provoke another motorist.
- Don't tailgate or flash your lights at another driver.
- If you are being followed too closely, move over and let the driver pass you.
- Use your horn sparingly.

### If you encounter an angry driver:

- Avoid eye contact.
- Steer clear and give the driver plenty of room.
- Don't make inappropriate hand or facial gestures.
- If you are concerned for your safety, call 911.

## Do Not Drive Impaired

- **Drinking and driving** — Alcohol is a drug that affects your overall driving ability. Alcohol slows your reaction time so it takes longer to act in an emergency. It also affects your vision. Alcohol may make you overconfident and unable to concentrate well. Drivers who drink make more mistakes. Alcohol affects your driving even if you are below the level of legal intoxication (.08 blood-alcohol content). Drinking even a small amount of alcohol increases your chances of having an accident.
- **Medication and other drugs** — Many prescription and nonprescription drugs can impair safe driving, including antihistamines, cold remedies, pain relievers, mood-altering drugs, marijuana, hashish, LSD, heroin, cocaine, morphine and amphetamines (pep pills). Mixing even small amounts of alcohol with other drugs is extremely dangerous. **It is illegal to operate a motor vehicle in Illinois with any trace of a controlled drug, substance, cannabis (marijuana) or intoxicating compounds in your blood.**

## Share the Road with Others

### Police/Emergency Vehicles

Motorists are **required by law** to yield the right-of-way to all police and emergency vehicles that have their sirens on and/or lights flashing.



- When being approached by an emergency vehicle using audible and visual signals, immediately pull to the right side of the road and wait for the emergency vehicle to pass. If stopped at an intersection with two-way traffic, remain stopped until the emergency vehicle passes.
- When approaching a stationary emergency vehicle using visual signals, yield, change to a lane away from the emergency vehicle and proceed with caution. If a lane change is not possible, reduce speed and proceed with caution.

### Construction Areas

When approaching or entering a construction or maintenance area, slow down, yield to any authorized vehicles or workers in the area, change to a lane away from the workers and proceed with caution. If a lane change is not possible, reduce speed and proceed with caution.



1. **Expect the unexpected.** Normal speed limits may be reduced, traffic lanes may be changed and people may be working on or near the road.
2. **Slow down.** Speeding is one of the major causes of work zone crashes.
3. **Don't tailgate.** Keep a safe distance between you and the vehicle ahead of you. The most common crash in a highway work zone is a rear-end collision. Leave at least two car lengths between you and the vehicle in front of you.
4. **Steer clear of workers.** Keep a safe distance between your vehicle and the workers and their equipment.
5. **Observe the signs.** Warning signs are there to help you and other drivers move safely through the work zone. Observe the posted signs until you see the one that says you have left the work zone.
6. **Obey road crew flaggers.** A flagger has the same authority as a regulatory sign, so you can be cited for disobeying his/her directions.
7. **Stay alert and minimize distractions.** Keep your full attention on the roadway and avoid changing radio stations or using your cell phone.
8. **Keep up with traffic.** Help maintain traffic flow and posted speed limits by merging as soon as possible. Don't drive right up to the lane closure and then try to merge.
9. **Allow time for delays.** Check for work zone delays at the National Work Zone Safety Information Clearinghouse at <http://wzsafety.tamu.edu>.
10. **Be patient and stay calm.** Remember, the work zone crew members are working to improve the road and make your future drive better.

Offenders speeding in a construction zone are subject to the following penalties:

- \$375 minimum fine; repeat offenders: \$1,000 fine.
- If the offense results in an accident: \$10,000 maximum fine and 90-day to two-year driver's license suspension.
- If the offense causes the death of another person: 3-28 years imprisonment.
- Drivers ticketed twice in two years: 90-day driver's license suspension.

## **Funeral Processions**

Requirements for motorists involved in a funeral procession and those encountering a funeral procession are covered by state law and municipal ordinance.

- The lead vehicles in a funeral procession must be properly marked, including a rotating/flashing amber or purple light, or alternating flashing headlamps (visible for 500 feet).
- A properly equipped hearse or coach may be a lead vehicle.

### **Vehicles involved in a procession are required to follow these rules:**

- All vehicles must follow the preceding vehicle in the procession as closely as is practical and safe under the conditions.
- Vehicles must have emergency flashers on while in the procession.
- The lead vehicle must first stop at a stop sign or red traffic signal, then proceed when safe to do so or the signal turns green. When the lead vehicle enters an intersection, all vehicles in the procession may follow the lead vehicle through the intersection without stopping at traffic signals.
- The driver of each vehicle in the procession must use the highest degree of care toward any other vehicle or pedestrian on the roadway.
- All vehicles in the procession must yield the right-of-way to any approaching emergency vehicle with its sirens on or lights flashing, or when directed to do so by a law enforcement officer.

### **Motorists who encounter a funeral procession must follow these rules:**

- Yield the right-of-way to any vehicle that is a part of an organized funeral procession.
- Do not drive between the vehicles in an organized funeral procession, except when required to do so by a law enforcement officer.
- Do not join a funeral procession for the purpose of securing the right-of-way.
- Do not attempt to pass any vehicle in an organized funeral procession, except where a passing lane has been specifically provided.
- When an organized funeral procession is proceeding through a red signal light, a vehicle not in the organized funeral procession may not enter the intersection unless the vehicle can do so without crossing the path of the funeral procession.

## School Buses

- When driving through school zones, observe the posted speed limit and be alert for children walking, riding bicycles and waiting for school buses, and obey all school bus laws.
- A school bus with **yellow lights flashing** indicates the bus is preparing to stop to pick up or drop off children. Slow down and prepare to stop.
- A school bus with **red lights flashing** and stop arm extended indicates the bus has stopped to load or unload passengers. Stop and wait until the red lights stop flashing and the stop arm is raised before proceeding with caution.
- On a two-lane roadway, vehicles must stop in both directions. On a four- or more-lane roadway, vehicles on the same side as the bus must stop.

## Bicyclists

Be extremely cautious when sharing the road with bicyclists. **Bicyclists must follow the same rules of the road as vehicles**, but because they move slower and are more vulnerable than other vehicles, motorists must pay extra attention and give them plenty of room to maneuver. Be especially careful and slow down in residential areas where young children are riding in the streets.



## Pedestrians

Without a vehicle or protective equipment, pedestrians are most at risk in traffic. Both drivers and pedestrians are responsible for traffic safety; however, drivers should always be prepared to yield the right-of-way to pedestrians.

## Deer/Vehicle Collisions

Keep a close watch for deer at dawn and dusk when deer are most active. Be especially alert in wooded or remote areas. Slow down and be on the lookout for deer-crossing signs. Just because you don't see a deer-crossing sign posted doesn't mean deer won't unexpectedly appear.

### If you see a deer along the roadside:

- Use your high-beam headlights when there is no opposing traffic. The headlight beam will illuminate the eyes of deer and provide greater driver reaction time.
- Immediately slow down upon seeing a deer. Do not swerve as this can confuse deer as to where to run. It could also cause you to lose control of your vehicle.
- Flash your lights or honk your horn to frighten deer away from the side of the road.
- Turn on your emergency lights to let other motorists know about the potential hazard.

- If you cannot avoid hitting the deer, maintain strong control of your vehicle. Some experts suggest to avoid braking at impact so the deer may pass underneath the vehicle as opposed to hitting the windshield.
- Look for other deer after one has crossed the road. Deer commonly travel in groups, so the probability is high that other deer will be in front of or behind the one you have just seen.
- Don't rely on hood-mounted deer whistles and other devices to scare away deer.
- Always wear your safety belt. Most people injured and/or killed in deer-automobile collisions were not wearing safety belts.

### **If you strike a deer:**

- Do not touch the animal. In attempting to move or get away, the deer could hurt you or itself.
- Move your vehicle off the roadway if possible.
- Call the police.

## **Inclement Weather Conditions**

Weather can create driving hazards. Take special care in fog, rain, high winds and winter weather.

### **Fog**

It is best to not drive in fog; however, if you must, take the following precautions:

- Drive with your headlights set on dim or use fog lights.
- Slow down. If you see headlights or taillights, slow down even more. A driver may be driving in the center of the roadway or may be stopped or barely moving.
- Do not overdrive your headlights. Stay within the limits of your vision; you may have to stop suddenly. If the fog is too dense, pull off the road and stop; do not drive at 5-10 m.p.h.
- Use your turn signal long before you turn, and brake early when you approach a stop to warn other drivers.

### **Rain**

- In light rain, water, dust, oil and leaves cause the roadway to become slippery. Increase following distance and take special precautions on curves and turns and while braking.
- In heavy rain, tires may "hydroplane," meaning the tires are riding on a thin layer of water and not on the roadway. Slow down to avoid hydroplaning. If you skid while hydroplaning, try to regain control of the vehicle. Otherwise, release the accelerator and ride out the skid.
- **Motorists are required by law to turn on headlights when operating the windshield wipers or during low-light conditions. Parking lights are not acceptable.**

## High winds

Wind can be a difficult problem for all drivers, but especially difficult for drivers of trucks, recreational vehicles, campers and trailers-in-tow.

- Reduce speed and make steering corrections when going from a protected area to an open area and when meeting large vehicles such as trucks and buses.
- Heavy rain or sleet often accompanies high winds so be alert to wet or slippery areas. In high winds, the Illinois Toll Way System bans the hauling of house trailers.

## Winter weather

Winter is the most difficult driving season due to many reasons, including ice, snow, lower temperatures and fewer daylight hours.

- Drive slow and increase your following distance. Roadway conditions may vary depending upon the sun, shade or roadway surface.
- Remove all snow and ice from your vehicle. Clear all windows, and do not start driving until your windshield is defrosted and clear. Make sure you have non-freezing windshield washer liquid and that your headlights and taillights are visible.
- Maintain your vehicle properly and be sure that lights, brakes, windshield wipers, defrosters, radiator and other parts are in good working order.
- Use snow tires and/or chains (where allowed). Snow tires give you extra traction, and chains increase safety on snow or ice-packed roads. Neither tires nor chains allow you to drive on bad roads at normal speeds.
- Brake slowly. Gentle braking in slow, steady strokes helps you find out how much traction you have. Begin braking early when you come to an intersection or a stop.
- Approach bridges, shaded spots, overpasses and turns with caution. They may remain icy after the rest of the roadway is clear and dry.
- Plan ahead. Carry a blanket, food and other survival equipment, such as a shovel, in your vehicle in case you become stranded.
- Remain in the vehicle if you become stranded. Run the engine only for brief times, and open a window to prevent carbon monoxide poisoning. Make sure the tailpipe is free of snow and debris.

## Railway Safety Tips

- Obey all signs and signals at railroad crossings. Always stop your vehicle when crossing gates are down or lights are flashing. Wait for the crossing gates to rise and lights to stop flashing before proceeding. Look both ways, listen and proceed with caution.
- Never stop your car on railroad tracks. When approaching an intersection at railroad tracks, keep your car behind the white lines.



- If your car stalls while crossing the tracks, get out immediately and move away from the tracks. Call 911 or the emergency number on the railroad signal equipment. If you don't have time to exit the vehicle, proceed in the direction of the train at a 45-degree angle so if the train strikes your vehicle you will be safe from flying debris.
- Be aware of trains both day and night. Trains may operate at any time of day or night in either direction.

## **Carjacking Prevention Tips**

Carjacking is occurring at an alarming rate. It can happen on your way to the grocery store or on your way home from work. National Insurance Crime Bureau statistics indicate that tens of thousands of carjackings occur in the United States each year. Nearly 75 percent of all carjackings involve the use of a gun or other deadly weapon.

### **Following are tips on how you can avoid becoming a victim of a carjacking:**

- Be alert and aware of your surroundings in and out of your vehicle at all times.
- Try to select safe times and locations to travel.
- Carry a cell phone for emergency communications when possible.
- When driving, keep your vehicle doors locked and windows rolled up at all times.
- Be especially alert at intersections, gas stations, ATMs, shopping malls, convenience and grocery stores — all are windows of opportunity for carjackers.
- Park in well-lighted areas with good visibility, close to walkways, stores and people.
- Avoid parking next to vans or high-profile vehicles.
- Lock all the doors of the vehicle.
- When returning to your vehicle, have your keys ready as you approach your vehicle to avoid wasting precious seconds while entering.
- Look around and inside before getting in your vehicle. Lock all doors immediately.
- Cooperate if a carjacker wants your vehicle or other valuables. Arguing or fighting may cause the criminal to escalate the violence.
- If the carjacker has a weapon, give up the vehicle no questions asked. Your life is worth more than a vehicle.

### **Carjacking Facts:**

- Parking lots are the favorite areas for carjackers, followed by city streets, residential driveways, car dealerships and gas stations.
- Carjackings take place very quickly; most take only 15-20 seconds to complete.
- Carjackers are usually armed, either with a gun or knife.
- Carjackings can be violent. Drivers have been beaten and even murdered while being pulled out of their vehicles.
- Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays account for nearly half of all carjackings.
- Fifteen metropolitan areas account for 90 percent of all carjackings in the United States.

## Vehicle Breakdowns/Equipment Failure

Crashes often happen when equipment fails. Your most important aid is remaining calm and keeping yourself and other motorists safe by getting off the road as quickly and safely as possible.

- ⦿ **Blowouts** — A thumping sound may be a warning of a blowout. Ease your foot off the gas pedal and keep a firm grasp on the steering wheel. Do not brake suddenly. Pull off safely to the side of the road and check tires.
- ⦿ **Loss of a wheel** — React as you would with a blowout. Ease off the gas pedal and pull off the road.
- ⦿ **Steering failure** — If you suddenly have no control of the steering wheel, ease your foot off the gas pedal, turn on the emergency flashers and allow the vehicle to come to a slow stop. Brake very gently to prevent the vehicle from spinning.
- ⦿ **Brake failure** — If the brake pedal suddenly sinks to the floor, pump it to build pressure. If that doesn't work, use the emergency or parking brake. To slow down, shift vehicle into a lower gear.
- ⦿ **Headlight failure** — If the headlights suddenly fail, try the emergency flashers, parking lights and/or turn signals. Pull off the road. If the lights begin to dim, drive to the nearest service station or pull off the road and call for help.
- ⦿ **Stuck gas pedal** — If the gas pedal becomes stuck, hook your toe under it to free it. If it doesn't become free, shift the vehicle into neutral and brake gently to slow down. If you have power steering or a locking steering wheel, do not turn off the ignition. You will lose either power steering or ability to steer.
- ⦿ **Blocked vision** — If your vision becomes blocked, roll down the side window to see, turn on the emergency flashers and pull off the road.

**For more information on traffic safety tips and laws, please consult the *Illinois Rules of the Road* booklet at [www.cyberdriveillinois.com](http://www.cyberdriveillinois.com), or by contacting:**

**Secretary of State  
Driver Services Department  
Traffic Safety  
17 N. State St., Ste. 1159  
Chicago, IL 60601  
866-247-0213**

If you require assistance, place this booklet  
in a window with the **SEND HELP** visible.

**SEND HELP**

If you see a **SEND HELP** sign, sound your horn and signal to the stranded motorist. Go to the nearest telephone and give the location of the stranded motorist to the police department.