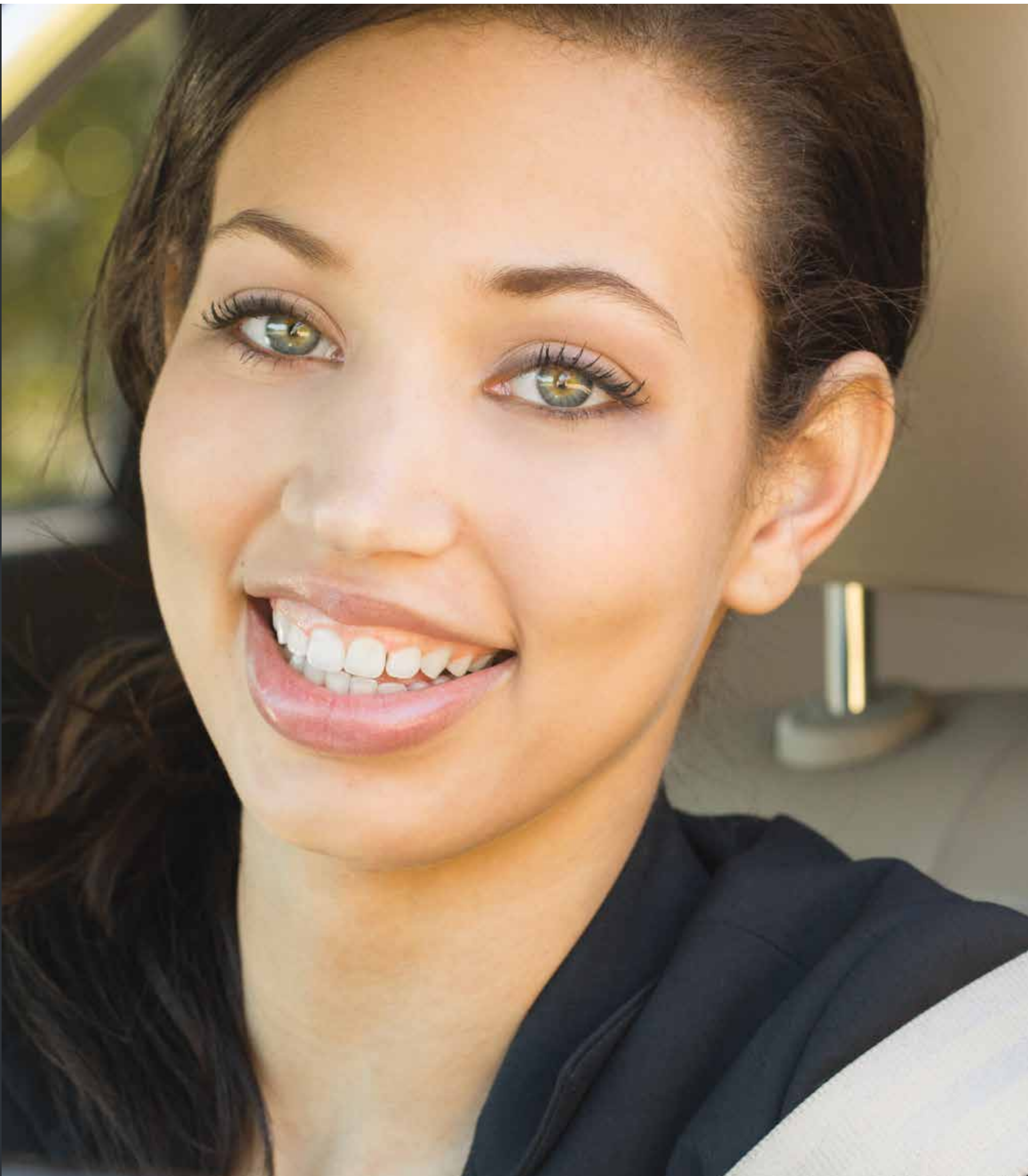


# Driving Safety guide



# Emergency Vehicles

**D**uring an emergency, mere seconds can make the difference between life and death. As a driver of a passenger vehicle, it is your responsibility to give the right away to vehicles like police cars, ambulances and firetrucks. By allowing first responders to do their jobs efficiently, you may be helping to save a life.

While your state may have different regulations regarding how to react to a responding emergency vehicle, standard practice is to get out of its way. Read on for tips on how to best react when you see lights and hear sirens.

## BE AWARE

Modern vehicles make it hard to hear the world outside. Thanks to enhanced air conditioning systems, louder stereos and increased efforts to insulate cabins, you may not always hear an emergency vehicle coming. Being aware of your surroundings is crucial.

Always look both ways before crossing an intersection, even if you have the right of way. You should also keep a safe distance from the other vehicles around you in case you are required to veer into another lane with little warning.

## ACTIONS DURING APPROACH

After you spot an emergency vehicle, know what to do. Here are recommendations from the National Safety Commission on how to act:

**In your lane:** If you notice a vehicle approaching in your lane, pull over to the nearest shoulder of the roadway to clear their path.

**In an opposite lane:** Slow



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vehicle or pull it to the edge of the road, in case they need to enter your lane.

## MOVE OVER LAW

If you see an emergency vehicle on the side of the road,

change to the outside lane. According to the National Safety Commission, between 1999 and 2009, more than one emergency worker per month was killed while aiding a motorist by the side of the

road.

These dangerous instances caused 47 states to enact a move over law. If you are unable to safely change lanes, you should always slow down when approaching a vehicle

with their emergency lights on.

Check with your local government to learn proper procedures; some areas require motorists to slow to at least 20 miles per hour less than the posted speed limit.

# Has Your Vehicle Been Recalled?

Ignoring safety recalls for your vehicle puts everyone on the road at risk.

Recalls can either be voluntarily announced or directly from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. The NHTSA has caused more than 390 million vehicles, 46 million tires and 42 million child safety seats to be recalled and corrected.

## THE SAFETY RECALL PROCESS

There are several steps to a recall becoming announced. Here is a quick breakdown of the process, as defined by the NHTSA:

- **Manufacturer's role:** The vehicle's manufacturer will notify registered owners by first-class mail within 60 days of notifying the NHTSA of a recall decision. They will also explain the process of how to correct the issue.
- **NHTSA:** The organization monitors each safety recall to ensure owners receive safe, free and effective remedies from the manufacturer.
- **Owner's role:** Your responsibility is to follow the tips from the manufacturer in their notification. You should schedule an appointment with your local dealership to resolve the issue.

## CHECK TWICE A YEAR

In 2017, there were 813 new vehicle safety recalls affecting more than 30 million automobiles in the United States. While manufacturers do their best to notify drivers of these issues, there are times when you may miss the alert they send.

Because of this, NHTSA recommends using the tool on its website to check your vehicle's status twice a year. You only need your vehicle identifica-



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tion number to find any safety recalls that are incomplete and issues that have been discovered over the past 15 years. Also make sure and check with your local dealership any time you

bring your car in for service.

## WHEN BUYING A USED CAR

It may take years before serious safety defects are realized. It's important to

do thorough research on a used vehicle before you make a purchase. Always run the VIN to ensure there aren't any known issues that have yet to be corrected.

# Defensive Driving Courses

Staying safe on the road is the responsibility of every driver. There is likely a course near that could one day save your life. Keep reading to learn more about defensive driving.

Depending on your state, graduating from a defensive-driving course may even save big bucks on your insurance rates. Talk with your agent and the experts at your local motor vehicles office to discover how these classes can benefit you.

## WHAT IS DEFENSIVE DRIVING?

When Americans hear the term defensive driving, some immediately think of a way to qualify for ticket dismissal or to reduce points on their license. While defensive driving does have its role in these instances, it is also a technique that all drivers should use.

Here are a few examples of defensive driving practices:

- Look ahead and expect the unexpected.
- Control your speed and maintain a safe-following distance from other vehicles.
- Be prepared and anticipate the reactions of other drivers.



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- Drive accordingly based on weather and road conditions.

## WHAT TO EXPECT AT A COURSE

No matter your age or driving ability, you can benefit from taking a defensive driving course. While each curriculum may be slightly different, most will highlight these important factors:

- **Traffic crash statistics:** Learn about the times when

most accidents occur and the age groups with highest incident rates.

- **Your vehicle's safety equipment:** Learn the importance of on-board safety tools like seat belts, airbags and child safety seats.

- **Accident prevention:** How to practice using a proper following distance, sharing the road, passing procedures and looking ahead for potential hazards.

- **Dangers of impaired driv-**

**ing:** Understand the risks associated while driving under the influence of alcohol, fatigue or anger.

Don't forget to share what you've learned with your family and friends and encourage them to take a course themselves.

## ONLINE OR IN A CLASSROOM?

Finding a qualified class in your area is easy. Many states offer helpful courses online or

in a classroom setting. When deciding which one is right for you, consider which would make it easier for you to learn.

Some people benefit from having an in-person experience where their questions and concerns can be addressed immediately. Others like the convenience of online courses and how it helps them learn at their own pace. There is no wrong answer, just make sure you're able to absorb the lessons.

# Know the Car Seat Rules

Even among parents, there's a great deal of confusion about the proper use of car seats. While your little one might protest the five-point harness or being rear-facing, it's critical he or she stays in the correct seat for their age, weight and height. Every state has its own rules, so check with local officials to make sure you're keeping your children safe.

## REAR-FACING

Rear-facing seats are best for younger children. They have a harness and, in the event of a crash, cradle the neck and spine to prevent injury. The NHTSA recommends children stay in a rear-facing seat up to age 3.

**Infant carriers:** These basket-type seats can only be used rear-facing.

**Convertible seats:** These seats convert from rear-facing, to front-facing, then to a booster seat. They can keep your child rear-facing longer than the typical seat. Keep your child rear-facing until they max out the limits set by the seat's manufacturer.

Teach your children that while some of their friends or siblings may be front-facing, you're doing the right thing to keep them safe. Also teach your children from a young age proper car seat behavior so you can focus on the road.

## FRONT-FACING

The NHTSA recommends children be in a front-facing seat from ages 1-7, depending on your child's size and your seat manufacturer's recommendations. Only move your child to the front-facing when they've outgrown the manufacturer's recommendations and meet state guidelines. Once they've flipped around, keep them in the harness sys-



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tem for as long as possible before moving to the car's seat belt.

## BOOSTER SEAT

A booster seat helps your child fit into the car's seat belt.

A properly fitting seat belt, the NHTSA says, lies snugly across the upper thighs, not the stomach. The shoulder belt is across the shoulder and chest and doesn't hit the neck or face. Your child should

always sit in the back seat; in the event of a crash, the front seat's airbags can do serious damage to a child.

Once your child can meet these requirements and your state's regulations, they can

travel safely without a booster seat. Also, local officials often hold installation checks for free throughout the year. Visit any one of these checks to make sure your seat is properly installed.

# Importance of the Speed Limit

Speeding can cost you much more than just a ticket. According to the Department of Transportation, there were 10,111 speed-related fatalities in 2016. When driving, pay attention to the posted speed limits; it is enforced to protect you and others.

## HISTORY

In 1901, Connecticut was the first state to pass a speed-limit law for motorized vehicles. The American Safety Council states the legal restrictions held vehicles to 12 miles per hour in cities and 15 miles per hour during highway driving.

Over the following decades, other states began adopting their own speed limits. In the early 1970s, Congress stepped in to try and combat oil shortages by directing the Department of Transportation to withhold highway funding from states who didn't set their maximum speed at 55 miles per hour.

In 1995, the federal government gave control back to the states in the National Highway System Designation Act. Today, some highways have limits as high as 80 miles per hour.

## DANGERS OF SPEEDING

More than a quarter of all traffic fatalities in 2016 involved speeding. It can be easy to get lost in your thoughts while driving and exceed legal limits without noticing. Here a few reasons the fatality rate is so high in speed-related accidents, per the NHTSA:

- There is a greater potential for loss of vehicle control.
- Crash severity is greatly



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enhanced, leading to more severe injuries.

- Reaction time for an abrupt stop is reduced.
- On-board occupant-protection equipment loses some

of its effectiveness.

If you constantly find yourself rushing on the roads to arrive at appointments or work on time, plan to leave earlier.

## SPECIAL CONDITION SPEED LIMITS

When a special condition speed limit is posted, it overrides statutory restrictions for a section of the roadway. You

will typically see these around schools, construction zones, changeable signs based on weather conditions and advisory speeds, typically around sharp curves or exit ramps.

# Share the Road

Everyone on the road is responsible for the safety of themselves and others. You will meet several different vehicles during a daily commute. Here's how to treat different vehicles on the road.

## BICYCLES

In some areas, bicyclists have their own designated paths along roadways. Don't forget to give cyclists the right away and slow down if you are driving next to them. Some states may have laws governing the distance a car must maintain around a cyclist. For example, the New York Governor's Traffic Safety Committee recommends leaving at least four feet between you and a cyclist while passing.

## SCHOOL BUSES

Buses signal drivers about 300 feet before they stop with yellow flashing lights. Once it has stopped, a sign is stretched to alert other vehicles to halt. Extreme caution is required when approaching a school bus as children will likely be walking across the street.

Always check the area before resuming your drive, even if the bus has signaled you are clear to move.

## CONSTRUCTION WORKERS

Construction zones are an extremely



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dangerous place to work. Distracted drivers may fail to see a worker before it's too late. Watch for flashing lights on signs, barrels, and cones alerting you to change lanes or slow your speed. If you find yourself stopped in construction traffic, you should be able to see the rear tires of the vehicle in front of

you. This provides you with room if an emergency exit is necessary.

## TRACTOR TRAILERS

Eighteen-wheelers are a staple of American highways because of their important role in moving goods across the country.

Their massive size requires a skilled driver inside and the care of vehicles around them. Avoid being in their blind spots or passing them and slowing your speed drastically. These trucks can't stop as quickly as passenger vehicles and have much larger blind spots.

# Driving Safety: By the Numbers

**W**hile you may be an attentive and exceptional driver, don't let yourself become convinced that accidents won't happen to you.

The following statistics from the United States Department of Transportation's 2016 Fatal Traffic Crash Data reveal the serious dangers which are present each time you're behind the wheel.

- There were 10,428 fatalities attributed to drunk-driving accidents – a four percent increase from 2015.

- United States roadways saw a 5.6 percent increase in fatal accidents in 2016: 37,461 versus 35,485 in 2015.

- Alcohol-impaired driving fatalities accounted for 28 percent of the overall fatalities in 2016.

- The country averaged 102 fatalities per day on its roadways; pedestrians accounted for 16 of these daily tragedies.

- There were 5,286 motorcyclists killed in accidents, 2,089 of these drivers were not wearing helmets.

- Large trucks were involved in collisions which took the lives of 4,317 people.

- In fatal truck accidents, its occupants

accounted for 17 percent of those who perished, other vehicles made up 72 percent and nonoccupants made up 11 percent.

- 5,987 were killed in traffic collisions; 2,222 of them had a BAC of .01 or higher.

- Seat belts were credited with saving 14,668 lives for those five years of age and older.

- Frontal airbags saved 2,756 lives of people age 13 and older.

- There was an average of 29 alcohol-impaired driving fatalities per day.

- The nationwide seat belt usage rate is at 90.1 percent. However, 10,428 of the year's fatalities were unrestrained.

