

CHAPTER 6 — HIGHWAY DRIVING

Good driving requires you to be observant and aware of your surroundings. You must look down the road, to the sides, and behind your vehicle. Be alert for unexpected events. Many crashes occur because drivers do not pay enough attention to their driving. Do not take your eyes off the road for more than a few seconds at any one time. For example, if you need to look at a map, pull safely off the road. Do not try to read the map while you are driving.

DRIVE IN THE PROPER LANE

When driving on a highway with a total of two lanes (one lane in each direction), drive in the right hand lane. You may cross the center line for passing when there are no oncoming vehicles and no solid yellow line. On highways with a total of four or more lanes (two or more lanes in each direction), always keep to the right unless you are passing slower traffic, letting another driver have room to enter safely, or getting ready to make a legal left turn.

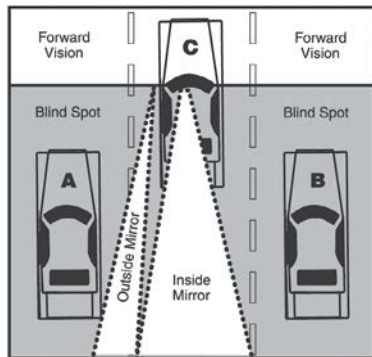
CONTROLLING SPEED

The best way to control your speed is to know how fast you are going. Check the speedometer often, and pay attention to the posted speed limits. This is especially true when you leave high speed roads and begin driving on much slower local roads. For more information on Missouri's speed limits, refer to Chapter 3.

PASSING ON HIGHWAYS

Use the left lane only to pass another vehicle. You can use the right lane when passing a vehicle that is making a left turn. Never use the shoulder or unpaved part of the highway to pass.

Before you pass a vehicle in front of you, make sure you are in a safe passing zone. On four-lane highways, check the left lane for traffic by using your left and inside rearview mirrors and briefly looking over your left shoulder. Looking over your left shoulder is important because it allows you to check for "blind spots." **Blind spots** are the spaces you cannot see with your rearview mirrors. Do not drive in another vehicle's blind spot.



- **Try to avoid driving on either side and slightly to the rear of another vehicle.** Either speed up or drop back so the other driver can see your vehicle more easily.

- **When passing another vehicle, get through the other driver's blind spot as quickly as you can without exceeding the speed limit.** The longer you stay there, the longer you are in danger of having the vehicle collide with your vehicle.
- **Never stay alongside, or immediately behind, a large vehicle such as a truck or bus.** These vehicles have large blind spots and it is hard for their drivers to see you. If you cannot see the truck driver's face in the truck's side mirror, the truck driver cannot see you. It takes longer to pass a truck. After you pass, make sure you can see the cab of the truck in your rearview mirror before reentering the lane. Maintain your speed. Do not slow down once you are in front of the truck.

If the way is clear, signal that you are changing lanes. Pass the other vehicle quickly and smoothly, being careful not to exceed the speed limit.

Give plenty of room to the vehicle you just passed. Do not turn back into the right lane until you see the passed vehicle in your rearview mirror. Remember to look over your right shoulder to check your blind spot, and be sure to signal.

BEING PASSED

If another vehicle begins to pass you, stay in your lane and do not increase your speed. If many vehicles are passing you in the right lane of a multi-lane roadway, you are probably going slower than the rest of the traffic. Unless you will be turning left soon, you should move into the right lane when the way is clear.

ADJUSTING TO TRAFFIC

Vehicles moving in the same direction and lane, and at the same speed cannot hit one another. Traffic crashes involving two or more vehicles often happen when drivers go faster or slower than other vehicles on the road.

If you are going faster than traffic, you will have to keep passing others. Each time you pass someone, there is a chance for a collision. The vehicle you are passing may change lanes suddenly, or on a two-lane road, an oncoming vehicle may appear suddenly. Slow down, and keep pace with other traffic. Speeding does not save more than a few minutes an hour.

Going much slower than other vehicles can be just as bad as speeding. It tends to make vehicles bunch up behind you and drivers then become impatient and pass you. If vehicles are piled up behind you, pull over and let them pass when it is safe to do so.

BE AWARE OF THE TRAFFIC AROUND YOU

Check your rearview mirrors every few seconds to keep track of the approaching traffic. Make sure other drivers see you. Be sure to keep a safe distance (refer to Chapter 8) between you and the vehicle in front of you.

SLOW MOVING TRAFFIC

Some vehicles cannot travel very fast, or have trouble keeping up with the speed of traffic. If you spot these vehicles early, you have time to change lanes or slow down safely. Slowing suddenly can cause a traffic crash.

- Watch for large trucks and small, underpowered vehicles on steep grades or when they are entering traffic. They can lose speed on long or steep hills and it may take longer for these vehicles to get up to speed when they enter traffic.

STOPPING

Never stop on the highway itself. Many highways have rest stops and service areas.

Be alert so that you know well ahead of time when you will have to stop. Stopping suddenly is dangerous. Braking quickly could cause you to lose control of your vehicle. You also make it harder for drivers behind you to stop without hitting you. Try to avoid panic stops by seeing events well in advance. By slowing down or changing lanes, you may not have to stop at all, and if you do, it can be a more gradual and safer stop.

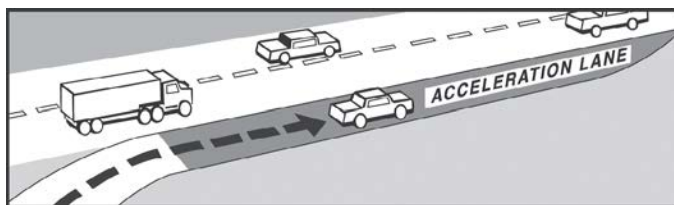
You can stop on the shoulder of the highway in an emergency. If you do, alert other drivers by turning on your emergency flashers. It is also helpful to raise the hood, or tie a white cloth to the antenna.

CONTROLLED ACCESS HIGHWAYS

Many highways have controlled access. This means you can enter or leave the highway only where there are entrance or exit ramps.

ENTERING THE HIGHWAY

Entrance ramps are short, one-way ramps used to get on the highway. At the end of most entrance ramps is an acceleration lane. Use the ramp and acceleration lane to increase your speed to match the speed of the vehicles on the highway.

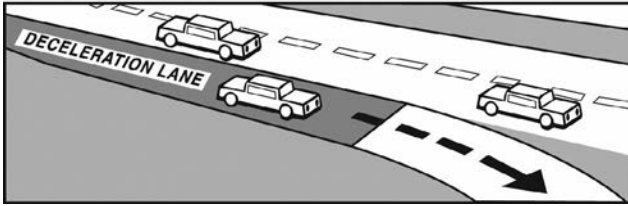


As you are speeding up, watch for an opening in the highway traffic. Switch on your turn signal, and pull smoothly into the traffic. **DO NOT** stop at the end of an acceleration lane unless traffic is very heavy and you have to stop.

Drivers already on the highway should give you room to enter, but if they don't, **DO NOT** force your way onto the highway. You must yield the right-of-way to them, even if that means stopping at the end of an acceleration lane.

LEAVING THE HIGHWAY

Exit ramps are short, one-way ramps. At the beginning of most exit ramps is a deceleration lane. Make sure you are in the proper lane to leave the highway well in advance of the deceleration lane.



Use the deceleration lane and the exit ramp to slow down when leaving the highway. Be sure you obey the speed advisory sign on the exit ramp. Be ready to stop or yield at the end of the ramp.

If you miss your exit, DO NOT stop, back up, or try to turn around on the highway. You will have to get off the highway at the next exit and come back to the exit you missed.

INTERCHANGES

Where two busy highways meet, there may be interchanges with entrance and exit ramps. An interchange can be confusing if you have not driven on it before. A Diverging Diamond Interchange, DDI, is a relatively new design that you may encounter while driving in Missouri. When driving through a DDI, you will travel on the left side of the roadway for a short distance. There are directional signs on all interchanges that can help you determine where you need to go.

SOME COMMON INTERCHANGE DESIGNS:

Cloverleaf



Diamond



Directional



Diverging Diamond



WATCH OUT FOR “HIGHWAY HYPNOSIS”

Highway hypnosis can make you feel sleepy and unaware of the traffic around you. Highway hypnosis is caused by the sameness of the road and traffic. The hum of the wind, tires, and engine also adds to the hypnosis.

You can avoid highway hypnosis by constantly moving your eyes and watching the traffic and highway signs around you. If you feel sleepy, pull off the highway. Do not risk falling asleep at the wheel.

STOP DRIVING WHEN YOU FEEL SLEEPY

When you feel tired, it is harder to make decisions and to react to the traffic around you. You may fall asleep at the wheel. When you feel sleepy, pull off the highway at the nearest rest stop or service area. If you are really sleepy, take a nap. Tired drivers are a great danger to themselves, other drivers, and can be as dangerous as intoxicated drivers.

EMERGENCIES

If your vehicle breaks down on a highway, make sure other drivers can see you and your vehicle. Traffic crashes occur because a driver did not see a stalled vehicle until it was too late to stop.

If possible, use a 2-way radio, telephone, or cellular phone to notify authorities that your vehicle (or someone else's) has broken down. Many roadways have signs that tell you the CB channel or telephone number to call in an emergency. The cellular number to call in an emergency is *55. If you are having vehicle trouble and have to stop, consider the following:

- If at all possible, get your vehicle off the road and away from traffic.
- Turn on your emergency flashers to show you are having trouble.
- If you cannot get your vehicle off the roadway, try to stop where other drivers have a clear view of your vehicle. Do not stop just over a hill or just around a curve.
- Try to warn other drivers that your vehicle is there. Place emergency flares behind the vehicle. This alerts other drivers to change lanes if necessary.
- Never stand in the roadway. Do not try to change a tire if it means you have to be in a traffic lane. Lift the hood or tie a white cloth to the antenna, side mirror, or door handle to signal an emergency.