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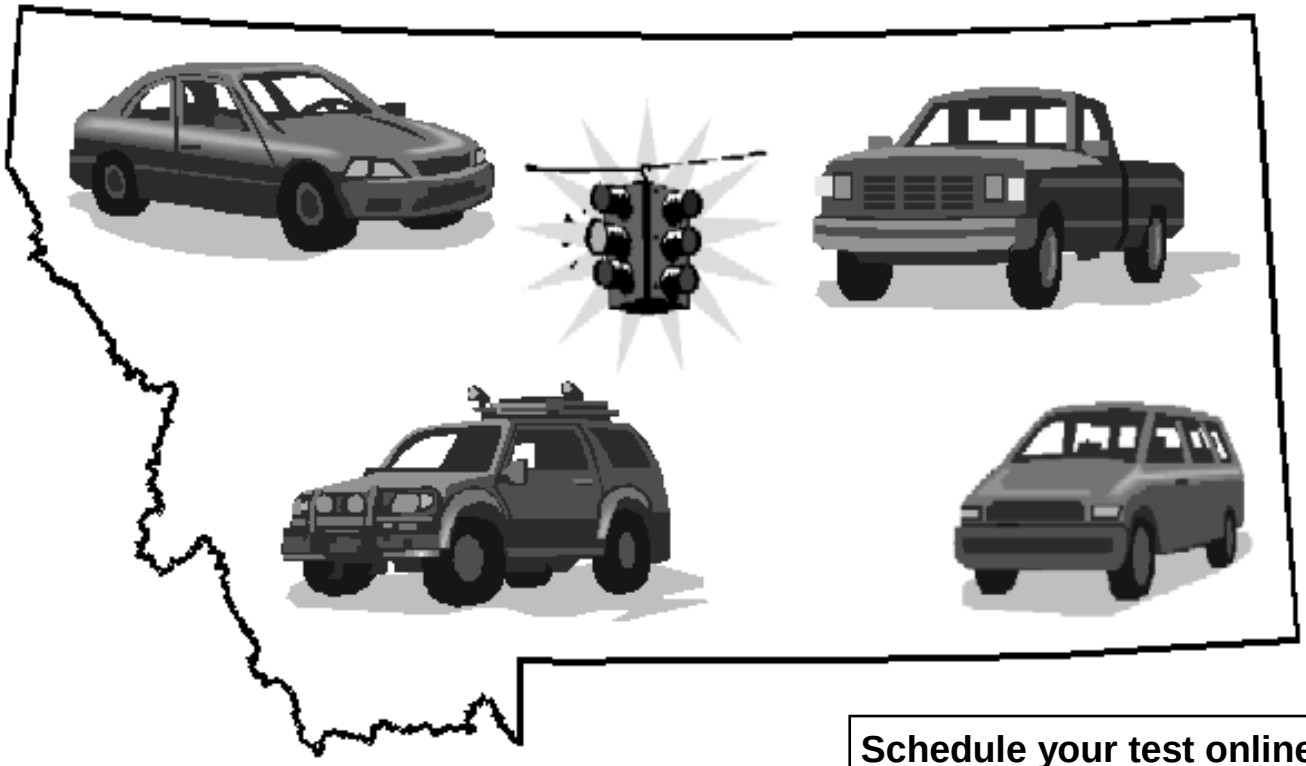
MONTANA DRIVER LICENSE MANUAL



Schedule your test online:
www.doj.mt.gov/driving

Montana Department of Justice
MVD
Motor Vehicle Division
Safety • Efficiency • Dependability

Department of Justice
Motor Vehicle Division
Field Operations Bureau
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Dear Fellow Montanan:

As Montanans, we don't think twice about jumping in our vehicles and driving 300 or 400 miles to visit family, watch our kids play sports or find a stream where the fish are rising. Whatever the reason for our travels, the Montana Driver License Manual provides a wealth of information to help us stay safe on our roads and highways.

In addition to a section on the "Rules of the Road," this manual contains important information on checking your vehicle before a trip, what to do in emergencies, tips for driving safely and staying alert, and when *not* to drive because of fatigue or alcohol and drug use. There's a lot for new drivers to learn and for experienced drivers to remember.

It's often been said that Montana is a small town with long streets. Wherever you're headed, drive carefully and make sure you arrive safely.

Steve Bullock
Attorney General

This manual will give you information on safe driving rules and practices to help you become a safe driver. Be sure to read the manual carefully. Unless you know the information that it contains, you cannot pass the knowledge test. This driver manual is not intended to be a complete reference of motor vehicle laws. Further information may be obtained from a public library, law enforcement agency, driver examiner, visiting the web site at www.doj.mt.gov/driving, by writing the Motor Vehicle Division at P.O. Box 201430, Helena, MT 59620-1430, or calling the office at 406-444-3933.

**** NOTICE****

A Montana driver license applicant must provide his/her Social Security number on the application or renewal application (MCA 61-5-107). Please note, however, that this number will not be used as your driver license number.

In Montana your driver license number will be a system-generated number.

The following documents will be accepted to verify your Social Security number:

- **Social Security card**
- **Payroll check stub (if it displays your Social Security number)**
- **State or federal tax forms**
- **Military DD-214 papers (on which your Social Security number appears)**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SECTION 1 - THE DRIVER LICENSE 1

DRIVER LICENSING – A QUICK REFERENCE 1
Appointment Scheduling 1
MONTANA LICENSES AND PERMITS 1
New Residents 2
Military 2
PROOF OF AUTHORIZED PRESENCE, IDENTITY, AND RESIDENCE 2
1. PROOF OF AUTHORIZED PRESENCE 2
2. PROOF OF IDENTITY 3
Proof of Full Legal Name and Date of Birth 3
Primary Documents can include: 3
Secondary Documents can include: 4
3. PROOF OF MONTANA RESIDENCE 4
GRADUATED DRIVER LICENSING (GDL) PROGRAM 5
GDL Step 1: Instruction Permit – Driving With Supervision 5
GDL Step 2: First-Year Restricted License 6
GDL Step 3: Full-Privilege Driver License 6
DEFINITIONS 6
Class D Basic Driver License (non-commercial license) 6
Commercial Driver License (CDL) 6
Identification (ID) Card 6
Instruction Permits 7
Motorcycle Endorsement 7
Motorcycle Learner License 7
FEES/RECEIPTS 7
DRIVER LICENSE RENEWAL 8
LOST OR DESTROYED LICENSES 8
CHANGE OF ADDRESS 8
NAME CHANGE 8
VOTER REGISTRATION 9
SELECTIVE SERVICE 9
ORGAN DONATION 9
LIVING WILL 9
MINI - QUIZ 10

SECTION 2 - KEEPING THE DRIVER LICENSE 11

SUSPENSION 11
REVOCATION 12
CANCELLATION 12
LICENSE RESTORATION 12
DRIVER IMPROVEMENT POINTS, AND THE HABITUAL TRAFFIC OFFENDER PROGRAM 14
RIGHT TO HEARING 14
LICENSE PLATE/DRIVER LICENSE SUSPENSION FOR NO INSURANCE 14
PROBLEM DRIVER POINTER SYSTEM (PDPS) 14
DRIVING WHILE SUSPENDED OR REVOKED 14
ALCOHOL IGNITION INTERLOCK PROGRAM 15
DRIVING UNDER THE INFLUENCE 15
SCREENING FOR ALCOHOL 16
MINOR IN POSSESSION 16
MINOR UNDER AGE 21 WITH A BLOOD ALCOHOL CONCENTRATION OF 0.02% OR GREATER 16
DRIVING RECORDS 17
How to Request a Driving Record 17
In Person 17
By Mail 18
Online 18

Who Can See a Montana Driving Record? ... *18*
MINI - QUIZ ... 19

SECTION 3 - BEFORE YOU DRIVE ... 20

TRIP PLANNING ... 20
CHECK THE VEHICLE ... 20
Braking System ... *20*
Lights ... *20*
Windshield and Wipers ... *21*
Tires ... *21*
Steering System ... *21*
Suspension System ... *21*
Exhaust System ... *21*
Engine ... *21*
Loose Objects ... *21*
Horn ... *22*
MOTOR VEHICLE EQUIPMENT ... 22
Head Lamps & Tail Lamps (MCA 61-9-220 & 221, 61-9-204) ... *22*
Vehicle Light Distances ... *22*
Signal Lamps (MCA 61-9-218) ... *22*
Stop Lamps ... *23*
License Plate Lamp ... *23*
Red Reflectors (rear) ... *23*
Muffler ... *23*
Mirror ... *23*
Brakes and Parking Brakes ... *23*
Horn ... *23*
Safety Glass ... *23*
Window Tinting and Sun Screening ... *23*
Parking Lamps ... *24*
ADDITIONAL EQUIPMENT REQUIRED ON CERTAIN VEHICLES ... 24
Clearance Lamps and Side Marker Lamps ... *24*
Reflectors ... *24*
Projecting Load Lamp or Flag ... *25*
Special Lighting for Farm Tractors & Implements of Husbandry ... *25*
Spot Lamps & Auxiliary Lamps (Fog Lamps) ... *25*
Additional Brake Requirements ... *25*
Maintenance of Brakes ... *25*
Certain Warning Devices Prohibited ... *25*
Driver Response to Emergency Vehicle Signals ... *26*
Mud Flaps Required ... *26*
Safety Chains ... *26*
Certain Vehicles to Carry Flares or Other Warning Devices ... *26*
Display of Warning Devices when Vehicles Disabled ... *27*
Slow Moving Vehicles ... *27*
CLEAN GLASS SURFACES ... 28
ADJUST SEAT AND MIRRORS ... 28
USE SAFETY BELTS AND CHILD RESTRAINTS ... 28
MINI - QUIZ ... 30

SECTION 4 - LANGUAGE OF THE ROAD ... 31

KNOW SIGNS BY THEIR SHAPE AND COLOR ... 31
SIGNS, SIGNALS AND ROAD MARKINGS ... 32
Signs ... *32*
Intersection Traffic Control Signs ... 32
Regulatory Signs ... 32
Warning Signs ... 34
Construction and Maintenance Signs ... 36
CONSTRUCTION ZONE ... 37
SCHOOL ZONE SAFETY STANDARDS ... 38

School Area ... *38*
School Zone ... *38*
School Crossings ... *38*
School Speed Limit ... *38*
Parking and Stopping ... *38*
Fines ... *38*
TRAFFIC SIGNALS ... 38
Vehicle Signals ... *39*
Pedestrian Signals ... *39*
ROUNDABOUTS IN MONTANA ... 40
Large Vehicles ... *40*
Pedestrians ... *40*
Bicyclists ... *40*
Emergency Vehicles ... *40*
RAILROAD CROSSING WARNING SIGNS/SIGNALS ... 41
Advance Warning Signs ... *41*
Pavement Markings ... *41*
Railroad Cross Buck Signs ... *41*
Flashing Light Signals ... *41*
Gates ... *41*
ROAD MARKINGS ... 41
PAVEMENT MARKINGS ... 41
Edge and Lane Lines ... *42*
White Lane Markings ... 42
Crosswalks and Stop Lines ... 42
Yellow Lane Markings ... 42
Other Lane Controls ... *43*
Reversible Lanes ... 43
Reserved Lanes ... 43
Shared Center Lane ... 43
No Lane Markings ... *43*
MINI - QUIZ ... 44

SECTION 5 - RULES OF THE ROAD ... 45

GENERAL DRIVING ... 45
PASSING ... 45
TURNING ... 45
Right Turns ... *45*
Left Turns ... *45*
Turning Around ... *46*
RIGHT-OF-WAY ... 46
Pedestrians ... *46*
Intersections ... *47*
Overtaking Vehicles ... *47*
Emergency Vehicles ... *47*
School Buses ... *48*
Funeral Procession ... *49*
BICYCLISTS AND MOTORISTS ... 49
Same Road – Same Rules – Same Rights ... *49*
Equipment and Lighting Required for Bicycles ... *51*
PARKING ... 51
No Parking Zones ... *52*
MINI - QUIZ ... 53

SECTION 6 - SAFE DRIVING TIPS ... 54

DON'T BE A DISTRACTED DRIVER ... 54
Be a safe driver: ... *54*
BASIC DRIVING ... 54
Starting ... *54*
Accelerating ... *55*

Steering ... *55*
Controlling Speed ... *55*
Stopping ... *55*
SEEING WELL ... 55
Scanning ... *56*
Look Ahead ... 56
Look to the sides ... 57
Intersections ... 57
Railroad Crossings ... 57
Look Behind ... 57
When Changing Lanes ... 58
When You Slow Down ... 59
When Pulling Away From the Curb ... 59
When You Back Up ... 59
Night Driving ... *59*
COMMUNICATING ... 60
Letting Others Know You Are There ... *60*
Use Headlights ... 60
Use Your Horn ... 60
When NOT to Use Your Horn ... 60
Use Emergency Signals ... 60
Stay Out of the Blind Spot ... 61
Letting Others Know What You Are Doing ... *61*
Use Your Signals to Communicate ... 62
Signal When You Slow Down ... 62
ADJUSTING SPEED ... 63
Adjusting to Road Conditions ... *63*
Curves ... 63
Slippery Roads ... 64
Water on the Roadway ... 64
Adjusting to Traffic ... *64*
Keep Pace With Traffic ... 64
Entering Into Traffic ... 65
Leaving Traffic ... 65
Slow Moving Traffic ... 65
Trouble Spots ... 65
Adjusting to How Well You Can See ... *66*
Darkness ... 66
Rain, Fog or Snow ... 66
Hills and Curves ... 66
Parked Cars ... 66
Sight-Distance Rule ... 66
Speed Limits ... 67
SHARING SPACE ... 67
Space Ahead ... *67*
Space Behind ... *68*
Space to the Side ... *68*
Space to Merge ... *69*
Space to Cross or Enter ... *69*
Spacing ... *70*
Space for Special Situations ... *71*
Those who cannot see you ... 71
People who are distracted ... 71
People who may be confused ... 71
Drivers in trouble ... 71
MINI - QUIZ ... 72

SECTION 7 - BE IN SHAPE TO DRIVE ... 73

VISION AND HEARING ... 73
Vision ... *73*

Side Vision ... 73
Judging Distances and Speeds ... 73
Night Vision ... 73
Hearing ... *74*
Fatigue ... *74*
DRINKING AND DRIVING ... 74
Why is Drinking and Driving So Dangerous? ... *74*
If you Drink, When Can You Drive? ... *75*
Alcohol and the Law ... *75*
Open Containers ... 75
Report a Drunk Driver ... *76*
OTHER DRUGS AND DRIVING ... 76
HEALTH ... 77
Epilepsy ... *77*
Diabetes ... *77*
Heart Condition ... *77*
EMOTIONS ... 77
MINI - QUIZ ... 78

SECTION 8 - EMERGENCIES ... 79

VEHICLE EMERGENCIES ... 79
Brake Failure ... *79*
Tire Blowout ... *79*
Power Failure ... *79*
Headlight Failure ... *79*
Gas Pedal Sticks ... *80*
AVOIDING COLLISIONS ... 80
Stopping Quickly ... *80*
Turning Quickly ... *80*
Speeding Up ... *81*
DEALING WITH SKIDS ... 81
PROTECT YOURSELF IN COLLISIONS ... 81
Hit from the rear ... *81*
Hit from the side ... *81*
Hit from the front ... *82*
ACCIDENTS ... 82
At the accident scene ... *82*
If someone is injured ... *82*
Report the accident ... *82*
MOTOR VEHICLE INSURANCE ... 83
MINI - QUIZ ... 84

SECTION 9 – TITLE AND REGISTRATION ... 85

REGISTRATION OF MOTOR VEHICLES ... 85
License Plates ... *85*
Campers ... *86*
What You Should Know About Your Title ... *86*
When Buying a Vehicle ... *86*
When Purchasing From a Car Dealer ... *86*
Registration and License Plate Fees ... *86*
Taxation of Motor Vehicles ... *87*
Schedule of Fees ... *87*
Motor Homes ... 87

SECTION 1 - THE DRIVER LICENSE

Anyone who operates a motor vehicle or motor-driven cycle on public roadways in Montana is required to have a license. It is mandatory to have and maintain proof of vehicle liability insurance on the vehicle being operated.

DRIVER LICENSING – A QUICK REFERENCE

- New residents must apply within 60 consecutive days, 30 consecutive days for commercial.
- Driver license number is a system-generated number.
- Knowledge, vision and a road test for first license.
- A basic driver license (Class D) is valid for a maximum of four to eight years, typically expiring on the holder's birthday.
- Minimum age is 16 years (15 years with driver education) and is valid until 21st birthday.
- Motor vehicle operators must have valid Montana Driver License in possession at all times and Motorcycle Endorsements are required to operate a motorcycle or motor scooter.
- Fees: Driver License $5.00 **per year** until expiration, Motorcycle or Endorsement $0.50 **per year** until expiration, Replacement Driver License $10.00, ID Cards $8.00; see the Commercial Driver License Manual for commercial fees. Pay for a license at a County Treasurer's Office or a Motor Vehicle Driver Exam Station. Full fee schedule available at www.doj.mt.gov/driving/driverlicensing.asp.
- Administered by Motor Vehicle Division, Field Operations Bureau.
- For online scheduling visit www.doj.mt.gov/driving/appointmentscheduling.asp.

APPOINTMENT SCHEDULING

Some driver exam stations now require scheduled appointments.
Visit www.doj.mt.gov/driving/appointmentscheduling.asp to determine if a station in your area offers this service. If so, you may schedule your appointment online from this site. At participating stations, **appointments are required for all services** except Montana license renewal, Montana license replacement and a Montana identification card.

MONTANA LICENSES AND PERMITS

A person may *not* apply for, be issued or retain a Montana driver license if he/she is suspended or revoked in any other state and/or jurisdiction.
You *may* obtain a driver license if you:

Are 18 years of age or older:

- are able to submit acceptable documentation to prove:
  - Authorized Presence (see page 2 in this manual)
  - Identity (see page 3 in this manual)
  - Residency (see page 4 in this manual)
- pass the required driver license tests.
- turn in any other driver licenses.
- pass the needed medical requirements for the type of driver license desired.
- have not been found by a court to be mentally incompetent, alcoholic, and/or a habitual user of illegal drugs.

Are under 18 years of age:

- are at least 15 years of age and have passed a traffic education course approved by the Department of Justice and the Superintendent of Public Instruction.
- are at least 16 years of age without traffic education course.
- have parental/guardian consent for licensure and accepting financial responsibility.
- are able to submit acceptable documentation to prove:
  - Authorized Presence (see page 2 in this manual)
  - Identity (see page 3 in this manual)
  - Residency (see page 4 in this manual)

Note: Please refer to the Graduated Driver License section on page 5 of this manual.

NEW RESIDENTS

If you move to Montana from another state and establish a permanent residence here, you must obtain a Montana driver license (if you have a commercial driver license, please refer to the *Commercial Driver License Manual* [www.doj.mt.gov/driving/forms.asp]). If you have a valid driver license issued by the jurisdiction from which you moved, you may use it for up to 60 consecutive days, after which time you must surrender it and qualify for a Montana license. Out-of-state drivers who hold a valid out-of-state license, and have it in their immediate possession, may exchange their basic driver license for a Montana driver license without a knowledge or road test. Applicants who may lack functional ability to safely operate a motor vehicle on the highway may be required to complete knowledge and driving assessments. You may have only one valid driver license, issued by any licensing jurisdiction, at any time.

MILITARY

Active duty military personnel and their dependents may retain their valid out-of-state license and drive in Montana, **unless** they become gainfully employed. If employment is secured, a Montana license must be obtained. Military personnel who present an active duty military card and who otherwise meet Montana driver licensing requirements will be issued a driver license with a standard license term, typically eight years, and the notation for military exemption on the back of the license: “Valid for 30 days after honorable discharge.” Once the military exemption has been added to the driver license, the holder may apply to renew the driver license outside the usual “six months before and up to three months after” renewal window. A licensee who has a military exemption may apply to renew that license at any time throughout their ongoing military service. Those who have the military exemption may drive on that license for up to 30 days after honorable separation from the military. These persons must renew their license during the 30-day grace period to avoid penalty of testing; they must also present DD-214 papers, showing honorable discharge. You may have only one valid driver license issued by any licensing jurisdiction at any time.

PROOF OF AUTHORIZED PRESENCE, IDENTITY, AND RESIDENCE

All applicants for a Montana driver license or identification card must provide the required documents from <u>each</u> of the following three categories.

1. PROOF OF AUTHORIZED PRESENCE

Applicants for a Montana driver license or identification card must provide proof that their presence in the United States is authorized under federal law – that is, they must prove that they are either a U.S. citizen or legally authorized to be in the U.S. A driver license issued to a person who is a foreign national and whose presence in the U.S. is temporarily authorized must expire no later than the expiration date of the official document issued to the person by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).

Below is a list of acceptable documentation:

- an original or certified copy of a birth certificate issued by a U.S. jurisdiction. (To obtain a certified copy of your birth certificate, contact VitalChek [www.vitalchek.com] or, for Montana birth certificates, the Office of Vital Statistics [www.dphhs.mt.gov].)
- a certification from the U.S. Department of State or a U.S. embassy of the birth abroad of a U.S. citizen (Consular Report of Birth Abroad, form FS-240 or Certification of Report of Birth, form DS-1350)
- a valid, unexpired passport issued by the U.S. Department of State
- a valid, unexpired passport card, issued by the U.S. Department of State
- a valid, unexpired passport issued by a jurisdiction other than the U.S. with:
  - an attached U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) record of arrival and departure (form I-94) (same name with an unexpired endorsement of the nonimmigrant status)
    OR
  - an unexpired permanent resident I-551 stamp
- a valid, unexpired certificate of naturalization (form N-550, N-570 or N-578)
- a valid, unexpired certificate of citizenship (form N-560, N-561 or N-645)
- a valid, unexpired Northern Mariana card (form I-551) with "Northern Mariana" imprinted instead of "permanent resident"
- a valid, unexpired American Indian card (form I-551) with "American Indian" imprinted instead of "permanent resident"
- a valid, unexpired U.S. Citizen identification card (form I-179 or I-197)
- a valid, unexpired permanent resident card (form I-551)

- a valid, unexpired temporary resident identification card (form I-688)
- a valid, unexpired U.S. re-entry permit (form I-327)
- a valid, unexpired refugee travel document (form I-571)
- a valid, unexpired employment authorization card (form I-688A, I-688B or I-766)
- a valid, unexpired record of arrival and departure, stamped "refugee" (form I-94) without a valid passport but stamped "refugee" with a photo affixed
- a digital identification card issued to the applicant by a federally recognized Native American Tribe whose reservation is located in Montana, that contains a digitized image of the applicant, the applicant's date of birth and tribal enrollment number

2. PROOF OF IDENTITY

If you are applying for a Montana ID card or Driver License, you will need to bring in the following documentation to prove FULL LEGAL NAME, DATE OF BIRTH, and MONTANA RESIDENCE:

PROOF OF FULL LEGAL NAME AND DATE OF BIRTH

You must provide **two** documents—either two primary documents, or one primary and one secondary document listed—to an examiner at a Montana driver license station to show proof of Full Legal Name and Date of Birth.

Primary Documents can include:

- a color photo driver license or identification card, not expired for more than four years, issued by a U.S. or Canadian jurisdiction
- a certified birth certificate issued by a U.S. or Canadian jurisdiction
  - Note: a certified birth certificate typically has the registrar's unique seal (e.g., raised, embossed, impressed or multicolored), the registrar's signature and the date the certificate was filed with the registrar's office
- a certification from the U.S. Department of State or a U.S. embassy of the birth abroad of a U.S. citizen (Consular Report of Birth Abroad, form FS-240 or Certification of Report of Birth, form DS-1350)
- a digital identification card issued to the applicant by a federally recognized Indian tribe whose reservation is located in Montana, that contains the applicant's digitized image, date of birth and tribal enrollment number
- an unexpired military identification card issued by the U.S. Department of Defense (active duty, reserve, retired personnel or dependent of active duty personnel) that contains a color photo or digitized image of the applicant and the applicant's date of birth
- a valid, unexpired passport issued by the U.S. Department of State or the Canadian government
- a valid, unexpired passport card issued by the U.S. Department of State
- a valid, unexpired passport issued by a jurisdiction other than the U.S. or Canada and either:
  - an attached U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) record of arrival and departure, form I-94 (same name with an unexpired endorsement of the nonimmigrant status) or
  - an unexpired resident permanent resident I-551 stamp
- one of the following valid, unexpired documents issued by the USCIS:
  - certificate of naturalization, form N-550, N-570 or N-578
  - certificate of citizenship, form N-560, N-561 or N-645
  - Northern Mariana card, form I-551 with "Northern Mariana" imprinted instead of "permanent resident"
  - American Indian card, form I-551 with "American Indian" imprinted instead of "permanent resident"
  - U.S. citizen identification card, form I-179 or I-197
  - permanent resident card, form I-551
  - temporary resident identification card, form I-688
  - U.S. re-entry permit, form I-327
  - refugee travel document, form I-571
  - employment authorization card, form I-688A, I-688B or I-766, or
  - record of arrival and departure, stamped "refugee", form I-94 without a valid passport but stamped "refugee" with a photo affixed
- a U.S. or Canadian-issued instruction, learner's driving permit or receipt of driver license or permit, if it is current and contains the applicant's photo and date of birth

- a prison inmate identification card issued to the applicant by the Montana Department of Corrections that contains a photo or digitized image of the applicant and the applicant's date of birth and adult offender number
- an emergency identification photo issued and certified by the driver licensing authority of a U.S. or Canadian jurisdiction that includes the applicant's name and date of birth - not acceptable for mail renewals or mail duplicate

Secondary Documents can include:

- a second primary document
- an original U.S. social security card or Canadian social insurance card
- a certified copy of a marriage certificate or license issued by a government jurisdiction
- a U.S. or Canadian driver license or identification card that has been expired for more than one year but not more than five years
- a current U.S. or Canadian government jurisdiction employee photo identification card
- a U.S. or Canadian driver license or identification card that is current but does not have a color photograph
- a certified copy of a court order or judgment from a U.S. or Canadian court of competent jurisdiction containing the applicant's full legal name and date of birth
- any USCIS document approved as a primary document, but that is not expired for more than one year
- a certified copy of a birth certificate issued by a jurisdiction other than by a state, territory or possession of the United States, the District of Columbia, or the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico or a province or territory of Canada
- a certification of release of discharge issued by the U.S. Department of Defense
- a Medicare, Medicaid or health insurance card with the applicant's name and individual Medicare, Medicaid or health insurance identification number
- an unexpired, color photo firearm or concealed weapon permit issued by a chief of police in an organized, full-time police department or the county sheriff in a local jurisdiction within the U.S.
- a current pilot's license issued by the U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Aviation Administration
- a certified copy of school records or a transcript containing the applicant's full name and, preferably, date of birth and issued by an elementary, secondary or postsecondary school
- a certificate of completion of a Montana department-approved traffic or driver education course containing the applicant's name and date of birth
- a current school photo identification card with the student's name and student identification number
- a certified copy, fax or photocopy of a certified copy of the birth certificate of the applicant's child, if the certificate lists the applicant's name and date of birth as parent

3. PROOF OF MONTANA RESIDENCE

Upon original application for a driver license or identification card, an applicant must present evidence of the applicant's Montana residence address. If the applicant does not receive mail at the residence or street address, a Montana post office box or mailing address also must be provided. The department accepts the following documents as evidence of a Montana residence address, provided the document shows the applicant's name and Montana residence address as it appears on the driver license application. (Bring in one of the following documents to prove your residential address.)

- any primary or secondary document as listed in Administrative Rules of Montana 23.3.131
- a U.S. or Montana income tax return for the previous year
- a Montana voter registration card
- a receipt for personal or real property taxes paid within the last year to the state of Montana or a Montana county
- a current automobile or life insurance policy or statement
- a certified copy of school records issued by the school the applicant is attending or attended within four months of the application
- a written statement from the applicant's parent, guardian or adult child that the applicant resides at the same address as the parent, guardian or adult child, along with a copy of a document permitted under this rule that shows the Montana residential address of the applicant's parent, guardian or adult child
- the original copy of a rental agreement or rent payment receipt signed by the landlord or rental agent that includes the applicant's name and residential address

- home mortgage or equity loan papers showing the applicant's name and residential address – a rural address will be accepted when there is no other physical address
- any of the following, dated or issued not more than four months prior to application:
  - a payroll check or payroll check stub
  - a bank statement
  - a utility bill or utility hook-up order
  - canceled mail addressed to the applicant
- if the applicant is homeless, a descriptive address of the location where the applicant actually resides, e.g., "under the west end of the East Street bridge." The applicant must also provide a separate mailing address and present a written statement from a social service agency on the agency's letterhead verifying the applicant's homeless status and the descriptive address given by the applicant

GRADUATED DRIVER LICENSING (GDL) PROGRAM

The Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL) program is a three-step progressive program that allows new drivers under the age of 18 to develop and improve their driving skills in the safest environment possible. Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death and injury for teenagers because teens lack driving experience. All new drivers – even honor roll students and “good kids” – are likelier than experienced drivers to be involved in a fatal crash. The GDL program helps reduce the number of teen motor vehicle crashes.
Each step is designed to progressively increase the skills, privileges and responsibilities of a new driver. The GDL program includes an instruction permit, first-year restricted license and full-privilege driver license.
A person may *not* apply for, be issued or retain a Montana driver license if he/she is suspended or revoked in any other state and/or jurisdiction.

GDL Step 1: Instruction Permit – Driving With Supervision

Requirements:

- Supervised Driving Practice
  - Teen drivers must acquire at least 50 hours of supervised driving experience, including 10 hours at night during a minimum of six months.
  - A driver with a TELL permit must be supervised by a licensed parent or guardian.
  - A driver with a Learner License must be supervised by a licensed parent or guardian, or a licensed adult driver who is authorized by the parent or guardian.
- Seatbelt Use: Everyone in the vehicle must wear a seatbelt.
- No Alcohol or Drug Use: The teen driver must not receive any traffic violations or alcohol/drug offenses in the six-month period before advancing to GDL Step 2: First-Year Restricted License.
- Age and Learner Permit Types
  - The teen driver must:
    - Pass the required driver license knowledge test.
    - Turn in any other driver licenses.
    - Pass the needed medical requirements for the type of driver license desired.
    - Have not been found by a court to be mentally incompetent, alcoholic, and/or a habitual user of illegal drugs.
  - Permit Types:
    1. A teenager may obtain a Traffic Education Learner License (TELL) as early as age 14 ½ years old **only if** he/she is participating in or has successfully completed a state-approved traffic education program.
    2. A teenager may obtain a Learner License from a driver exam station if:
       - he/she is 15 years old and successfully completed a state-approved traffic education program; or
       - he/she is 16 years old or older.
- Length of Permit
  - A teenager must hold a permit for a minimum of six consecutive months before applying for a First-Year Restricted License.
  - The permit itself is valid for up to one year.

GDL Step 2: First-Year Restricted License

Once all of the requirements of GDL Step 1 are satisfied, the teenager may obtain a First-Year Restricted License. To do this, the teenager will need to pay for all associated fees and bring all required documents, including the completed "Graduated Driver Licensing Parent Certification" form, to the driver exam station (see www.doj.mt.gov/driving/driverlicensing.asp). Initially, the driver license will show a restriction code on the front and back. This restriction will remain on the driver license for one year. A teenager's highest lifetime crash risk is in the first months of solo driving and first 1000 miles. Restrictions on night driving and passengers help reduce risk.

Restrictions of the First-Year Restricted License:

- Seatbelts Required: Everyone in the vehicle must wear a seatbelt.
- Night Driving: Fatal crashes are more likely to occur at night for all ages, but the risk is highest for teenagers.
    - Teenage drivers with a restricted driver license may not drive between 11:00 p.m. and 5:00 a.m. There are limited exceptions to this rule, including:
        - emergencies, farm-related activities, travel to and from school, church, or work and specific, parent-authorized purposes; and
        - law enforcement officials may contact the parent/guardian of the teen driver to verify the purpose for which he/she is authorized to drive between the time restrictions.
- Passengers: Crash risk increases when teens drive with teen passengers.
    - One passenger: For the first six months, unless supervised by a licensed adult driver, a teenage driver may have only one unrelated passenger under the age of 18 in the vehicle.
    - More passengers: For the second six months, unless supervised by a licensed adult driver, a teenage driver may have three unrelated passengers under the age of 18 in the vehicle.

Penalties for any Step 2 First-Year Restricted License violations

If a restricted driver violates any of the license restrictions, he/she will be penalized.

- First Offense: Between 20 to 60 hours of community service.
- Second Offense: Suspension of the teenager's driver license for six months.

GDL Step 3: Full-Privilege Driver License

The First-Year Restricted License restrictions automatically end on the date indicated on the back of the teenager's driver license, or when the individual turns 18 years old, whichever occurs first. Once the teenager reaches Step 3, his/her driver license confers full privileges.

DEFINITIONS

CLASS D BASIC DRIVER LICENSE (NON-COMMERCIAL LICENSE)

A Class D basic driver license allows you to drive any non-commercial vehicle under 26,000 pounds gross vehicle weight. In order to obtain your license, you need to pass the vision, knowledge and road tests. You may not have to test if you hold a valid license from another jurisdiction.

COMMERCIAL DRIVER LICENSE (CDL)

The operator of a commercial vehicle must have a Montana Commercial Driver License (CDL). To obtain a license, you will need to pass the vision and knowledge tests as well as a road test in the size of vehicle you wish to drive. To prepare for the CDL (Class A, B, or C), you will need to study a copy of the *Commercial Driver License Manual* [www.doj.mt.gov/driving/forms.asp]. If you desire to obtain a CDL, there are other requirements listed in the CDL manual.

IDENTIFICATION (ID) CARD

Any person who is a Montana resident and has a valid driver license from a jurisdiction other than Montana is not eligible for a Montana identification card. You must provide proof of full legal name, authorized presence, address, and birth date (acceptable documents are listed on pages 2, 3, and 4 of this manual), pay the appropriate fee and have your photo taken. The card is valid for four years.

INSTRUCTION PERMITS

'Instruction Permits' is a general term that includes the following:

- Traffic Education Permit (TEP)
  - A TEP allows a student who is enrolled in a state-approved traffic education course to operate a motor vehicle during the traffic education training, while under the direct supervision of a traffic education instructor. The TEP is only valid for the period in which the student is enrolled in the course.
- Traffic Education Learner License (TELL)
  - A TELL may be issued to any person who is at least 14 ½ years of age and who is participating in or successfully completed a traffic education course approved by the Department of Justice and the Superintendent of Public Instruction. A TELL entitles the licensee to operate a motor vehicle only when accompanied by an approved instructor or licensed parent or guardian.
  - Contact your local high school for details regarding state-approved traffic education courses.
- Learner License
  - This Learner License allows a driver to operate a motor vehicle when supervised by another driver, 18 years old or older, who is licensed to drive. If a holder of a learner license is under 18 years of age, the driver supervising must be a parent or legal guardian; or the supervising driver must have permission from the parent or legal guardian and be a licensed driver 18 years of age or older. In all vehicles, the licensed driver must sit in the right front seat.
  - To be eligible for a learner license, the applicant must be at least 16 years of age (without traffic education) or 15 years of age and successfully completed an approved driver education course. To obtain the learner license, the applicant will be required to present the appropriate documents (identification, authorized presence, proof of Montana residence), pay the licensing fees, pass the knowledge test and vision test at the driver exam station. If the teenage driver is under the age of 18, he/she must have a consent form signed by a parent/guardian before testing may begin. Signing obligates the parent/guardian to accept financial responsibility for any damage resulting from the minor's operation of a motor vehicle. The licensing receipt is good for one year from the date it is purchased. Learner license permits are issued when the primary knowledge test for the license type is passed and are valid for one year.

MOTORCYCLE ENDORSEMENT

A motorcycle endorsement is necessary to operate a motorcycle or any motorized two-wheel or three-wheel vehicle, classified as a motorcycle, on public roadways. To be eligible for a motorcycle endorsement you must hold or be eligible for a basic driver license. You must pay the licensing fee and pass the vision, knowledge and road tests. To prepare for the knowledge test, you will need to study the *Motorcycle Operator Manual* [www.doj.mt.gov/driving/forms.asp]. The road test may be waived if you have successfully completed and passed a Montana Motorcycle Safety Foundation (MSF) course in the past year, and provide a Montana MSF certificate upon application. The knowledge and road tests may be waived if you are transferring an out-of-state license with a motorcycle endorsement.

MOTORCYCLE LEARNER LICENSE

A motorcycle learner license is obtained by paying the licensing fee and passing the motorcycle knowledge test. The motorcycle learner license is valid for one year. Licensees must have immediate possession of their motorcycle learner license and be under the immediate and proximate supervision of a licensed driver who has a motorcycle endorsement.

FEES/RECEIPTS

The length of time a driver license will be valid determines the fees of which you will pay. The length of a driver license depends on several factors including:

- If you are under the age of 21, your license will expire on your 21st birthday.
- If you are between the ages of 21 and 75, your license will expire on your birthday eight years or less after the date of issuance or on your 75th birthday, whichever occurs first.
- If you are 75 years of age or older, your license will expire on your birthday four years or less after the date of issuance.
- A foreign national's license will expire on the expiration of their legal presence documents.

The fees for a Montana license and/or identification card are as follows:

- Any Class D basic license or a learner license listed ..... $5.00 **per year**
- Motorcycle endorsement ..... $0.50 **per year**
- Mail renewal notification fee $0.50
- Identification (ID) card $8.00
- Replacement License $10.00

Full fee schedule available at www.doj.mt.gov/driving/driverlicensing.asp.

Driver license receipts are valid for one year. For those testing, the receipt allows the applicant three attempts within that year to successfully pass all required examinations. **Receipts are not renewable. If the licensing process is not completed within one year, the applicant will need to re-apply and start the licensing process over.**

DRIVER LICENSE RENEWAL

You may renew your license up to six months before the expiration date of your license. If your license has expired it is not valid for operation of a motor vehicle; however, a renewal may be completed within three months after the expiration without retesting. Your privilege to drive ends when your license expires if you do not renew it. If you are found driving after the expiration date, you are driving in violation of the law and you may receive a citation.

If your license is more than three months expired, you must reapply as a new driver. You will need to provide acceptable documentation to prove identity, residency and authorized presence; you will also be required to pass all applicable licensing tests.

In order to renew your driver license, you must present the proper identification (see pages 2, 3, and 4 of this manual), pay the appropriate fee, make a personal appearance at an exam station, pass the vision test, and have a new photo taken. Applicants who may lack functional ability to safely operate a motor vehicle on the highway may be required to complete knowledge and road tests.

A person may not apply for, be issued, or retain a Montana driver license if he/she is suspended or revoked in Montana or any other state and/or jurisdiction.

LOST OR DESTROYED LICENSES

If your license is lost or destroyed, you may apply for a replacement at your local licensing station. You will be required to pay a $10.00 fee and present the proper identification (see pages 2, 3, and 4 of this manual) to verify your full legal name and date of birth. This identification is needed not only to establish your identity, but also to ensure no one else obtains a replacement license in your name.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

To make sure your driver license is kept current, you must notify the Field Operations Bureau of the Department of Justice within 10 days of any change of address. Forms for this purpose can be obtained at www.doj.mt.gov/driving/forms.asp, from most county treasurers, a patrolman, or any driver license examiner. This is important, as the licensing authority may wish to contact you regarding your driver license at any time. If they are unable to contact you, you could lose your driving privilege because you were not aware of orders or requirements that affect your privilege to drive.

NAME CHANGE

To change the legal name on your license with the Montana Motor Vehicle Division, you need to complete the appropriate application and present one of the following documents:

- a certified copy of the applicant's marriage certificate from the issuing government jurisdiction;
- a certified copy of a decree or judgment granting a name change from a court of competent jurisdiction;
- a certified copy of a divorce decree or dissolution of marriage granted the applicant that specifies the change of name required; or

- a certified copy of a Department of Homeland Security (DHS), U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), certificate of naturalization (Forms N-550, N-570) issued to the applicant.

VOTER REGISTRATION

You may register to vote at any Montana driver licensing exam station office. The Voter Registration form will be forwarded to the proper election administrator and a Voter Registration card will be mailed to the applicant. If you did not vote in the last presidential election, you should fill out a Voter Registration card.

SELECTIVE SERVICE

Young men who are at least 15 years of age and no older than 26 years of age are required to register in compliance with the federal Military Selective Service Act, 50 App. USC 453. An individual must be provided an opportunity to fulfill those registration requirements in conjunction with an application for an instruction permit, basic driver license, CDL or Montana ID card. If under 18 years of age, but at least 15 years of age, an individual must be provided an opportunity to be registered by the selective service system upon turning 18 years of age. An individual will have the opportunity to register when filling out an application at a Montana driver licensing exam station.

ORGAN DONATION

There are several reasons to be an organ donor, some of which are:

- to save another's life
- to improve the life of someone
- to contribute to the advancement of medical science

You can become an Organ and Tissue Donor by: requesting to have it marked on your driver license, going to the organ donor website at www.donatelifetoday.com or by calling, toll-free, 1-877-275-5269. Be sure to discuss your participation with relatives, physician and friends.

If you want to make changes to your donation wishes or decide you no longer want to be an organ and tissue donor, visit the website at www.donatelifetoday.com or call the toll-free number at 1-877-275-5269 to update or deactivate your record.

A minor who is at least 15 years old may request an Organ Donor designation on his/her driver license. Parental authorization is not required.

LIVING WILL

If you are 18 or older, you may choose to have your driver license indicate that you have a living will.

MINI - QUIZ

If you move, you must report your change of address to the Field Operations Bureau within:

- ☐ Two Weeks
- ☐ 15 days
- ☐ 10 days
- ☐ One Month

Parents, when signing for their child under 18 years of age, are indicating:

- ☐ That their child has passed a driver education course.
- ☐ That their child is a careful driver.
- ☐ That they are affirming their child's correct date of birth.
- ☐ That they are accepting financial responsibility for any damage as a result from the minor operating a motor vehicle.

What is the earliest a Montana Driver License can be renewed prior to the license expiration date:

- ☐ 3 months
- ☐ 6 months
- ☐ 9 months
- ☐ 12 months

SECTION 2 - KEEPING THE DRIVER LICENSE

To help protect citizens on Montana highways, the Montana Legislature has established certain conditions under which a driver license or driving privilege will be withdrawn from persons who violate traffic laws or who are otherwise not entitled to use our highways. Many people get into serious trouble with their driver license because they do not learn or understand the responsibilities of having a license. Under the law, a driver license may be suspended, revoked or cancelled for certain reasons.

SUSPENSION

The driver license and the privilege to drive a motor vehicle on public highways are withdrawn for a specified period. Examples of suspension include:

1. Driving under the influence or operating a motor vehicle with a blood alcohol concentration of 0.08% or greater.
   - First Offense: 6 month suspension
   - Second or Subsequent Offense: 1 year suspension

2. Refusal to submit to alcohol testing (implied consent or preliminary alcohol screening test).
   - First Refusal: 6 month suspension
   - Second or Subsequent Refusal: 1 year suspension

3. Operation of a vehicle by a person under 21 years of age with an alcohol concentration of 0.02% or greater.
   - First Conviction: 90 day suspension
   - Second Conviction: 6 month suspension
   - Third or Subsequent Conviction: 1 year suspension

4. A commercial driver operating a commercial motor vehicle with an alcohol concentration of 0.04% or greater.
   - First Violation Report: 1 year suspension
     (3 year suspension if transporting placardable hazardous materials.)
   - Second or Subsequent Violation Report: Lifetime Suspension
     (Reinstatement may be considered after 10 years.)

5. Minor in Possession of Alcohol (MIP)
   - MIP convictions are not recorded on an individual's Montana driving record. However, as part of the penalty for an MIP, judges have the authority to order the suspension of an offender's driver license. If a judge sends notice of a license suspension resulting from an MIP conviction, the Motor Vehicle Division will suspend the offender's driver license for the number of days ordered by the court and permanently record the withdrawal on the offender's driving record.

6. For the following violations, Montana law and other established rules, regulations and standards mandate that a driver license will be suspended for varied periods lasting from 30 days to 1 year (or in some cases indefinitely). These violations include, but are not limited to:
   - Driver convicted of 3 reckless driving offenses committed within a period of 12 months
   - Drivers who use a motor vehicle in the theft of motor vehicle fuel
   - Drivers who are medically unable to safely operate a motor vehicle
   - Failure to obtain required medical evaluation or submit to testing
   - Fraudulent application for a license to drive
   - Falsifying a date of birth on a driver license application
   - Altering a driver license or identification card to obtain alcohol
   - Authorizing another to use your driver license or identification card to obtain alcohol
   - Any unlawful use of a driver license

7. A driver license may also be suspended for:
   - Non-payment of fines or non-appearance on a notice to appear: upon notice from a court, a license will be suspended indefinitely until all conditions of sentencing are met.
   - Failure to pay child support: a license will be suspended indefinitely until child support obligations are met.
   - Default on a student loan: a license will be suspended indefinitely until notification is received by the student loan association stating that the obligations are met.
   - Unsatisfied judgment: 6 year suspension

REVOCATION

A license is terminated for a specific reason and may not be renewed or restored. When the period of revocation expires, and the individual meets all of the requirements to be licensed, that person must then apply for a new license, completing applications, paying all fees and taking all applicable knowledge and road tests. Upon receiving notice of a conviction from a court, a driver license will be revoked for:

1. A conviction for negligent homicide resulting from the operation of a motor vehicle.
   - 1 year revocation

2. A conviction for any felony in the commission of which a motor vehicle is used (including 4th Offense DUI / BAC violations).
   - 1 year revocation

3. Failure to stop and render aid as required in the event of a motor vehicle accident resulting in the death or personal injury of another.
   - 1 year revocation

4. Perjury or the making of a false affidavit or statement under oath relating to the ownership or operation of motor vehicles.
   - 1 year revocation

5. Negligent vehicular assault involving a motor vehicle.
   - 1 year revocation

6. Habitual traffic offenders accumulating 30 or more conviction points within a 3-year period.
   - 3 year revocation

CANCELLATION

A license will be annulled and terminated because a person is no longer entitled to such a license. However, upon meeting certain requirements, a person whose license has been cancelled may reapply for another license. Examples of cancellations include:

- The death of person signing minor's application
- Fraud and/or falsifying information on application for a license to drive
- Paying for driver license service with non-sufficient funds check
- Removal of parental consent
- Voluntary surrender of license
- Suspended or revoked in another state

LICENSE RESTORATION

With any suspension, revocation or cancellation, certain requirements must be met before a license to drive may be reissued. These requirements may include, but are not limited to:

- Payment of required reinstatement fee
- Filing proof of financial responsibility for 3 years
- Completion of treatment programs
- Surrender of old driver license
- Ignition Interlock device

- Retaking driver examination
- Recommendation of the court

Certain suspensions and revocations allow for “work” or “probationary” licenses; a probationary license is restricted to “essential driving only.” For details on a specific situation please contact the Motor Vehicle Division, 303 North Roberts, P.O. Box 201430, Helena, MT 59620-1430, phone (406) 444-3933, or your nearest driver examiner.

Montana law authorizes that a person who submits a certificate of completion from a department-approved driver rehabilitation program will receive a 50% reduction on the license reinstatement fee. For more information regarding the department-approved programs contact the Motor Vehicle Division at:

Montana Department of Justice, Motor Vehicle Division
Records and Driver Control Bureau
P.O. Box 201430
Helena MT 59620-1430

DRIVER IMPROVEMENT POINTS, AND THE HABITUAL TRAFFIC OFFENDER PROGRAM

Each traffic conviction has a certain amount of points assigned to it, as defined in the Habitual Traffic Offender law. These points range from zero to 15 points.

When determined by the record that an individual has 30 habitual offender points within three years, the Driver Control Bureau revokes the driver license for a period of three years. A person revoked as a Habitual Traffic Offender may apply for a probationary license after serving one year of the three year revocation, if eligible. Depending on the past driving history, proof of financial responsibility must be filed with the Motor Vehicle Division and all driver license fees must be paid and tests completed before a license is issued. Point designations include:

- Deliberate Homicide ..... 15 points
- Negligent Homicide (Vehicular) ..... 12 points
- Negligent Vehicular Assault ..... 12 points
- Felonies (Vehicular) ..... 12 points
- DUI ..... 10 points
- BAC of 0.08% or greater ..... 10 points
- Driving while suspended or revoked ..... 6 points
- Reckless Driving - driving with willful & wanton disregard for the safety of persons & property ..... 5 points
- Drag Racing ..... 5 points
- Insurance Violations ..... 5 points
- Hit and Run (Property) ..... 4 points
- Speeding ..... 3 points
- No Driver License ..... 2 points
- Other Moving Violations ..... 2 points

A person driving while revoked as a Habitual Traffic Offender may be imprisoned for a period not to exceed one year, fined not more than $1,000, or both. In addition, an additional one-year revocation of the license or privilege to drive will be added to the original revocation.

RIGHT TO HEARING

You may challenge the seizure and suspension or revocation of your driver license and/or driving privileges by filing a petition in district court, as provided in Montana Code Annotated (MCA) 61-8-403.

LICENSE PLATE/DRIVER LICENSE SUSPENSION FOR NO INSURANCE

Your vehicle license plates will be suspended for 90 days on a second offense, 180 days for a third offense within five years, for not having liability insurance in the vehicle, failure to carry proof of insurance, or failure to exhibit proof to officer upon demand. In addition, proof of insurance for the vehicle in question must be sent to the Motor Vehicle Division to release the suspension.

PROBLEM DRIVER POINTER SYSTEM (PDPS)

Montana is connected to a nationwide computer system that will search a common computer database to determine if a new applicant for a driver license is currently suspended or revoked in any jurisdiction. If you are, you may not make application or renew a license to drive in Montana until your previous driving status is no longer suspended or revoked.

DRIVING WHILE SUSPENDED OR REVOKED

Any person who drives while their license or privilege to drive is suspended or revoked in Montana or any other jurisdiction may be fined not more than $500, sentenced to a minimum of two days in jail and have an additional one year period of suspension or revocation added to their record. In addition, a person operating a

motor vehicle while their license is suspended or revoked for an alcohol offense will have their vehicle seized and rendered inoperable by the court for 30 days.

ALCOHOL IGNITION INTERLOCK PROGRAM

- Anyone who is convicted of a **first offense** Driving Under the Influence (DUI) or Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC) with a BAC of 0.16% or greater and is ordered to install a device by the court at time of sentencing; or
- Anyone who is convicted of a **second or subsequent** DUI or BAC offense within five years.

First Offender who is ordered to have the device installed in their vehicle is not subject to suspension or revocation of their driver license during the time the interlock device is installed for the term of suspension or revocation. An "administrative stay" of the license suspension or revocation shall be implemented for the period of suspension or revocation, as long as the participant does not violate restrictions or sanctions as noted in this manual.

When the $200 reinstatement fee is paid and notification is received from the interlock vendor that the device has been installed, a driver license, restricted to an interlock device, will be issued, if the driver is otherwise qualified to be licensed.

Second or Subsequent Offenders are required to install an alcohol interlock device for any second or subsequent offense for DUI or BAC. There is a mandatory one-year suspension of the driver license or privilege to drive; however, to receive a probationary license to drive, you must:

- pay a $200 reinstatement fee, payable to the Motor Vehicle Division;
- file proof of financial responsibility (SR-22) with your insurance company;
- surrender current driver license;
- install an alcohol interlock device;
- pay all driver license fees and take all portions of the driver testing; and
- enroll in and complete a Montana ACT Program.

After a second conviction for a DUI, a judge may order the **forfeiture** of any and all vehicles that belong to the convicted offender.

DRIVING UNDER THE INFLUENCE

Montana law states that a person driving with a blood alcohol concentration of 0.04% but less than 0.08% **may** be charged with DUI if that fact is considered with other competent evidence. Under the law, a driver is presumed to be impaired when the blood alcohol concentration reaches or exceeds 0.08%. For any impaired driving, there are serious, long-term consequences.

A person convicted of **driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs** shall be punished as follows:

First Time Offenders:
Will receive a minimum sentence of **24 hours in the county jail** and a **$300 fine**.

However, first time offenders could potentially be sentenced to a **$1000 fine and 6 months in county jail**; imprisonment may be suspended pending successful completion of a **court-ordered chemical dependency assessment, education or treatment**.

Multiple Offenders:
Could be sentenced to **fines up to $5000**, consecutive periods as long as **48 hours in county jail**, additional **mandatory imprisonment for up to 30 days** (of which portions as long as 10 days may <u>not</u> be suspended by the judge) and total **jail sentences as long as one year,** some or all of which may be suspended by the judge pending successful completion of a **chemical dependency treatment program**.

A person convicted of **operating a motor vehicle with a blood alcohol concentration of 0.08% or greater** shall be punished as follows:

First Time Offenders:

Will be punished by a minimum of **$300 fine and imprisonment up to 10 days**.

Multiple Offenders:

Could receive a **$5000 fine and imprisonment up to 6 months**.

Penalties may be doubled for a DUI/BAC violation if a passenger under 16 years of age is in the vehicle at the time of the offense.

A Fourth or Subsequent conviction for DUI is a felony and a convicted offender could receive up to **five years in jail** and a **$10,000 fine**.

SCREENING FOR ALCOHOL

Montana law allows for a Peace Officer, as a part of their screening for determining an impaired driver, to ask for a PRELIMINARY ALCOHOL SCREENING TEST; and in addition, any person who operates a motor vehicle on the ways of this state open to the public shall be deemed to have given consent to a chemical test of their blood or breath, for the purpose of determining the alcoholic content of their blood, if arrested by a Peace Officer for driving or being in actual physical control of a motor vehicle while under the influence of alcohol. If you refuse to submit to either the preliminary screening or regular test, the Peace Officer will seize your driver license, issue you a suspension or revocation notice and a temporary driving permit that will be valid for five days.

On first refusal, your driver license is suspended for six months, on a second or subsequent offense within five years; your license is suspended for one year with no provision for a probationary license.

MINOR IN POSSESSION

Minor in Possession (MIP) convictions are no longer reported to the Motor Vehicle Division (MVD) and MVD does not keep a tally of the number of offenses an offender has committed. However, if a judge decides to order the suspension of an offender's driver license as part of the penalty for the MIP, then the judge sends that MIP conviction to MVD, with the notation that a license suspension is required. Upon receipt of the conviction, MVD takes the appropriate driver improvement action against the offender, such as suspending the offender's license for the number of days ordered by the court, and that action is recorded in the driver improvement section of the offender's driving record.

MINOR UNDER AGE 21 WITH A BLOOD ALCOHOL CONCENTRATION OF 0.02% OR GREATER

- First Offense: Fine not less than $100 or more than $500 and suspension of driver license for 90 days.
- Second Offense: Fine not less than $200 or more than $500, incarceration for no more than 10 days if age 18 or older, and suspension of driver license for 6 months.
- Third or Subsequent Offense: Fine of not less than $300 or more than $500, incarceration for not less than 24 hours or more than 60 days (if age 18 or older), and suspension of driver license for one year.

In addition, a person convicted of a BAC 0.02% or greater must pay a $200 reinstatement fee and comply with an alcohol treatment program.

DRIVING RECORDS

A **driving record** is a collection of information maintained by the Motor Vehicle Division. A record consists of information compiled in five major categories:

- personal history information
- licensing information
- conviction/accident history
- driver license sanctions
- motor vehicle accident history

Your driving record maintains important details about your application for a driver license; the examination process; the subsequent issuance, denial, revocation, suspension or cancellation of a license; driver performance; and any other action taken in response to unsafe driver performance or other legal requirements.

A "History not on file" notation may be temporarily placed on your driving record to indicate that information has not yet been entered into the Motor Vehicle Division database. Once that information is entered in the system, the notation is removed from your driving record.

Your driving record is data compiled throughout the lifetime of a driver. Changes in legislation, computer systems, data sources, court cases and judicial rulings all affect the appearance and information included in your record. For additional details, read Understanding the Montana Driving Record (www.doj.mt.gov/driving/forms.asp#drivingrecords) or call the Montana Motor Vehicle Division Customer Service Center at (406) 444-3933.

Sections 33-18-210(9) and 61-5-208 of the Montana Code Annotated restrict how some aspects of a driving record may be used.

- While convictions older than three years may not affect your insurance rates, convictions for second or subsequent DUI will affect your record for five years between the date of the prior offense and the most recent offense.
- Conviction points remain on a driving record for three years from the conviction date. While the points are removed after three years, the convictions become a permanent part of a driving record.
- Completing a defensive driving class does not remove points from a driving record.
- If Montana drivers are convicted of a driving offense in another state, those convictions appear on their Montana driving records.
- If a driver with an out-of-state license is convicted of a driving offense in Montana, the conviction record is sent to the state in which the driver is licensed.
- All of the information on your motor vehicle record remains part of your **permanent driving record**.
- From year to year and from state to state, your driving record stays with you.

HOW TO REQUEST A DRIVING RECORD

Note: If you request more than a few records, they may not be available on the same day you request them.

IN PERSON

1. Complete a Release of Driving Records (Form 34-0100 www.doj.mt.gov/driving/forms.asp#drivingrecords) for each record requested, providing the full name, date of birth and license number of the driver. This form must be either **notarized** or you must bring a **copy of your state or government issued photo identification, such as a driver license, identification card or passport** with you. This photo identification cannot have been expired for more than four years.
2. Bring the form to:
   Motor Vehicle Division Office
   Scott Hart Building, Second Floor
   303 N. Roberts
   Helena, MT
3. Pay the $4 fee for each record requested.

By Mail

1. Complete a Release of Driving Records (Form 34-0100 www.doj.mt.gov/driving/forms.asp#drivingrecords) for each record requested, providing the full name, date of birth and license number of the driver. This form must be either **notarized** or you must **attach a copy of your state or government issued photo identification, such as a driver license, identification card or passport**. This photo identification cannot have been expired for more than four years.
2. In addition to the form, be sure to enclose:
   a. copies of the required identification (if the form is not notarized)
   b. the $4 fee for each record requested
   c. a stamped, self-addressed envelope

   (Alternately, if you would like the record sent via fax, enclose an additional $3 for each record and do not send a self-addressed envelope.)
3. Mail the required information and fee to:

   Motor Vehicle Division
   P.O. Box 201430
   Helena, MT 59620-1430

Online

For individuals:

1. Go to Driver History Records Service (https://app.mt.gov/dojdrs/) and click on the "Public User" button.
2. To continue, you must accept the Intended Use Statement, certifying that you will use the information only for allowed purposes.
3. You also need a valid credit card to pay the $7.25 fee for each record requested.
4. When you use the online service, the record is provided in an electronic format as soon as you complete the transaction, not through the mail. It can be printed or copied for your records.

For businesses such as insurance agencies and trucking companies that request large numbers of driving records:

1. Become a registered user of mt.gov (https://app.mt.gov/registered/; requires an annual registration fee) and sign a Restricted Use Agreement for Driving Record Information (https://app.mt.gov/registered/Restricted_Use_Agreement.pdf) stating that you will use this information only for allowed purposes.
2. Access Driver History Records Service (https://app.mt.gov/dojdrs/) on mt.gov, enter your username and password, and conduct your search.
3. You will then be billed $7.25 fee for each record.

Who Can See a Montana Driving Record?

Under Montana law, a Montana driving record may be released upon request as authorized in accordance with the Montana Driver Privacy Protection Act and a completed Release of Driving Records (Form 34-0100 www.doj.mt.gov/driving/forms.asp#drivingrecords). For more information, see Understanding the Montana Driving Record (www.doj.mt.gov/driving/forms.asp#drivingrecords).

MINI - QUIZ

Many people get into serious trouble with their driver license because:

- ☐ They forget to carry it while driving.
- ☐ They do not understand or inform themselves of the legal responsibilities of having a license.
- ☐ They do not show it when demanded by an officer.
- ☐ They use it for identification when cashing bad checks.

At what Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC) does the law state you are under the influence of alcohol?

- ☐ 0.00%
- ☐ 0.05%
- ☐ 0.08%
- ☐ All of the above

Your driving record is used:

- ☐ By the state and your local insurance company to establish how safe a driver you are.
- ☐ By the Department of Revenue to see if you have paid taxes.
- ☐ By direct mail companies to establish a mailing list.
- ☐ By the Registrar of Motor Vehicle to keep track of the vehicles you own.

What is a probationary license?

- ☐ A license restricted to essential driving only.
- ☐ A license to practice driving a commercial vehicle.
- ☐ A learner license to practice with.
- ☐ A temporary unrestricted license.

SECTION 3 - BEFORE YOU DRIVE

It is up to you to decide if you are physically and/or mentally capable of driving safely. Before you drive, make sure that your trip is needed. If you drive, your safety and that of the public depends a lot on what you do before driving, including adjusting your seat and mirrors, using safety belts, checking your vehicle, maintaining a clear view, and securing the vehicle.

Trip Planning

The cost of driving is not going down. There are ways you can help reduce your driving costs. First, determine your overall transportation needs. For each trip, determine if it is necessary. If so, there may be times you do not need to drive yourself. You might ride with someone else, or you could take public transportation if it is available.

The best way to prolong the life of your car and save on fuel is to use it as little as possible. Trip planning can make your life easier and help cut down on your driving.

- Take public transportation when it is available.
- Avoid driving during heavy traffic. It causes extra wear and tear on you and the vehicle.
- Use car pools or share rides whenever possible.
- Plan and then combine your errands; this will cut down on the number of trips you need to take. Make a list of the things you need and the places you need to go. Go to as many places as possible on any one trip. Take the shortest distance between places. Try to reduce the number of places you need to go.
- Call ahead to make sure that they have what you need or that what you are picking up is ready.

By doing these things, you can help cut down on the amount of traffic on the road, cut your travel costs, and save yourself time and effort.

Check the Vehicle

How safely you can drive starts with the vehicle you are driving, and how good of shape it is in. It is the duty of drivers to make certain that the vehicles they drive are safe to operate. A vehicle that is in bad shape is unsafe and costs more to run than one that is maintained; it can break down or cause a collision. However, if a vehicle is in good shape, it can give you an extra safety margin when you need it; and, you never know when you will need it.

You should follow your vehicle owner's manual for routine maintenance. Some you can do yourself, some needs to be done by a qualified mechanic.

A few simple checks will prevent trouble on the road.

BRAKING SYSTEM

Only your brakes can stop your vehicle properly. It is very dangerous if they are not working like they are supposed to. If they do not seem to be working properly, are making a lot of noise, smell funny, or the brake pedal goes to the floor, then have a mechanic check them.

LIGHTS

Make sure that turn signals, brake lights, taillights, and headlamps are operating properly. These should be checked from outside the vehicle. Brake lights tell other road users that you are stopping, and turn signals tell them you are turning. Driving with headlights on all the time helps other drivers see your vehicle during the day and at night.

An out-of-line headlight can shine where it does not help you and may blind other drivers. If you are having trouble seeing at night, or other drivers are flashing their headlights at you frequently, have a mechanic check the headlights.

WINDSHIELD AND WIPERS

Damaged glass blocks your view of the road and can more easily break in a minor collision or when something hits the windshield. Have the windshield replaced if the glass is damaged.

Windshield wipers keep the rain and snow off the windshield. Make sure they are in good operating condition. If the blades have not been working well, replace them. Remove snow and ice from all windows before you drive to clear your view of the road.

TIRES

Worn or bald tires can increase your stopping distance and make turning more difficult when the road is wet. Unbalanced tires and low pressure cause faster tire wear, reduce fuel economy, and make the vehicle harder to steer and stop. If the vehicle bounces, the steering wheel shakes, or the vehicle pulls to one side, have a mechanic check it.

Worn tires can cause “hydroplaning” and increase the chance of having a blow out during a trip. Check the tire air pressure with an air pressure gauge when the tires are cold. Check the vehicle owner’s manual for the proper pressure.

Check the tread with a penny. Stick the penny into the tread “head” first. If the tread does not come at least to Abraham Lincoln’s head, the tire is unsafe and you need to replace it.

STEERING SYSTEM

If the steering is not working properly, it is difficult to control the direction you want to go. If the vehicle is hard to turn or does not turn when the steering wheel is first turned, have the steering checked by a mechanic.

SUSPENSION SYSTEM

Your suspension helps you control your vehicle and provides a comfortable ride over varying road surfaces. If the vehicle bounces a lot, keeps bouncing after a bump or after you stop, you may need new shocks or other suspension parts. Have a mechanic check it out.

EXHAUST SYSTEM

The exhaust system helps remove toxic gases from the engine, helps reduce the noise from the engine, and helps cool the hot gases coming from running the engine. Fumes from a leaky exhaust can cause death in a very short time. It can also make you drowsy while driving. Never run the motor in your garage. Never sit in the car with the motor running without opening a window.

Luckily, most exhaust problems are leaks, which are easily heard; have them fixed.

ENGINE

A poorly tuned engine may lose power that is needed for normal driving and emergencies, may not start, gets poor fuel economy, pollutes the air, and could die on you when you are on the road, causing you and other traffic a problem. Follow the procedures recommended in the owner’s manual for maintenance.

LOOSE OBJECTS

Make sure that there are no packages or other objects on the rear shelf or back seat that could hit someone on the head in the event of a sudden stop or crash. Make sure there are no objects on the floor that could roll under the brake pedal so that you could not slow or stop the vehicle.

HORN

The horn may not seem like it would be important for safety, but as a warning device, it could save your life. It only should be used as a warning to others.

Motor Vehicle Equipment

Montana's laws require that certain equipment be installed on all motor vehicles, and that certain vehicles, such as larger trucks and trailers, have lighting and other equipment not needed on passenger cars. This is an attempt to outline all of these equipment requirements in an understandable manner. To this end, you will find all of the equipment which is required on EVERY vehicle listed below, followed by a listing for each type of vehicle which requires special or additional equipment.

When the law has indicated a level of performance for the equipment (the distance lights must be visible, etc.), that level has been indicated. For the more detailed information on such things as the location on the vehicle or specific installation requirements, a reference to Montana Code Annotated (MCA) Title 61, chapter 9 of the laws of Montana has been provided for your convenience. Generally, a copy of the Montana laws is available for reference in each county courthouse, most libraries, or on the Internet at:
http://data.opi.mt.gov/bills/mca_toc/index.htm

HEAD LAMPS & TAIL LAMPS (MCA 61-9-220 & 221, 61-9-204)

Vehicles manufactured after January 1, 1956 must emit white or amber light to the front and red or amber light to the rear, visible for 500 feet. Headlamps and tail lamps may not be tinted, covered by or treated with a tinted or colored material, substance, system, or component unless part of the original or optional equipment is in compliance with federal manufacturers' regulations.

Headlamps should be capable of illuminating persons or vehicles for a distance of 350 feet on high beam and 100 feet on low beam. High beam must be dimmed when meeting other vehicles at 1000 feet and when overtaking other vehicles at 500 feet. Head lamps are required to be in use at all times from one-half hour after sunset to one-half hour before sunrise and any other times when, due to weather or blowing dust, visibility is less than 500 feet.

VEHICLE LIGHT DISTANCES

1000 feet	Dim high beam headlights when meeting other cars
500 feet	Turn off high beam headlights when 500 feet behind other vehicles
500 feet	Turn on HEADLIGHTS if you can't see 500 feet ahead
500 feet	Tail lights distance
350 feet	High beam (brights) headlight distance
300 feet	Brake light distance in sunlight
300 feet	Turn signal distance in sunlight
100 feet	Low beam (dim) headlight distance
50 feet	License plate light

SIGNAL LAMPS (MCA 61-9-218)

Vehicles manufactured after January 1, 1956 must emit a white or amber light to the front and red or amber light to the rear, visible for 300 feet in the sunlight. A motor vehicle must be equipped with signal lamps when the distance from the center of the steering post to the vehicle's left outside limit is more than 24 inches, or when the distance from the steering post to the rear limit of the vehicle or load is more than 14 feet.

STOP LAMPS

(MCA 61-9-206)

Vehicles manufactured after January 1, 1956 must emit a red or amber light visible for 300 feet in normal sunlight.

LICENSE PLATE LAMP

(MCA 61-9-204)

Vehicles manufactured after January 1, 1956 must emit white light to illuminate license plate for 50 feet to the rear. License plate lighting that is not original manufacturer's equipment is prohibited.

RED REFLECTORS (REAR)

(MCA 61-9-205)

Must be visible at night when in front of high beam headlights for all distances between 50 and 300 feet.

MUFFLER

(MCA 61-9-403)

Must prevent excessive or unusual noise.

MIRROR

(MCA 61-9-404)

Vehicles manufactured after January 1, 1956 must provide 200 foot visibility to rear of the vehicle.

BRAKES AND PARKING BRAKES

(MCA 61-9-301, et al)

Must control the movement, stop and hold of the vehicle under all conditions of loading and on any grade incident to its operation.

HORN

(MCA 61-9-401)

Must provide warning audible for 200 feet.

SAFETY GLASS

(MCA 61-9-405, 61-9-408)

Vehicles manufactured after January 1, 1956 must be designed so as to reduce the likelihood of injury by a window shattering into small pieces instead of breaking into shards. Additionally, no materials may be attached to or replace such glass, which would restrict the view of the driver.

WINDOW TINTING AND SUN SCREENING

(MCA 61-9-405, 61-9-428)

Montana law applies strict standards for tinting and sun screening. You may want to check with your local examiner, county treasurer, or any law enforcement officer.

PARKING LAMPS

(MCA 61-9-214)

During the time head lamps are required, any vehicle which is parked or stopped on a roadway must be equipped with and display parking lights which must display a white or amber light to the front and a red light to the rear, visible for a distance of 500 feet.

Note: Flashing, blinking, sequential, rotating, or pulsating lights (other than turn signals) are prohibited except for emergency or authorized vehicles. Undercarriage decorative lighting that rotates, flashes, oscillates or displays a color for use by police or emergency vehicles is prohibited.

Additional Equipment Required on Certain Vehicles

CLEARANCE LAMPS AND SIDE MARKER LAMPS

(MCA 61-9-208 through 61-9-210)

If over 80 inches in width, every bus or truck, and every trailer or semi trailer in excess of 3000 pounds GVW, must have on the front and rear two clearance lamps, one at each side.

Every truck tractor must have on the front two clearance lamps, one at each side.

Every pole trailer in excess of 3000 pounds GVW shall have on each side one clearance lamp.

Any vehicle manufactured after January 1, 1956 shall be equipped with two tail lamps mounted on the rear, except motorcycles, motor-driven cycles, quadricycles and truck tractors.

Clearance lamps on the front or side of the vehicle shall display an amber light, and clearance lamps mounted on the rear of the vehicle shall display a red light. All clearance lamps shall be visible for 500 feet when required.

REFLECTORS

(MCA 61-9-208 through 61-9-210)

Every vehicle, whatever its size, must have on the rear: two reflectors and a stop light, in addition to the clearance lamps required; have reflectors with, or in combination with, clearance lamps which shall reflect the same color as the required clearance lamp. Required reflectors shall be visible at all distances between 600 feet through 1000 feet from the vehicle when illuminated by upper beam headlamps. Every truck or bus, whatever its size, must be equipped with two clearance lamps, reflectors, and a stoplight.

PROJECTING LOAD LAMP OR FLAG

(MCA 61-9-213)

Whenever any load extends four feet or more beyond the body of the vehicle, there shall be, during the time headlamps are required, a red light visible for 500 feet attached to the extreme rear end of the load. At all other times there shall be a red flag, not less than 12 inches square.

SPECIAL LIGHTING FOR FARM TRACTORS & IMPLEMENTS OF HUSBANDRY

(MCA 61-9-215)

During the time head lamps are required, any farm tractor or implement of husbandry, moved on the highway, must display a white light to the front, visible for at least 500 feet and a red light to the rear, visible for 500 feet. These lamps shall be mounted so as to indicate the extreme left projection of the vehicle.

SPOT LAMPS & AUXILIARY LAMPS (FOG LAMPS)

(MCA 61-9-217)

Any vehicle may be equipped with (not to exceed two) spot and/or auxiliary (fog) lamps. Spot lamps must be turned off when approaching another moving vehicle from either direction, and fog lamps may be used with lower head lamp beams if they do not project a beam stronger than the low beam head lamp.

ADDITIONAL BRAKE REQUIREMENTS

(MCA 61-9-304 through 61-9-315)

Every trailer, semi trailer and pole trailer equipped with air or vacuum brakes, or which has a gross weight in excess of 3000 pounds, must have “break-away” brakes, which are activated if the vehicle is separated from the towing vehicle.

MAINTENANCE OF BRAKES

(MCA 61-9-313)

All brakes shall be maintained in good working order and shall be adjusted to operate on all wheels equally.

CERTAIN WARNING DEVICES PROHIBITED

(MCA 61-9-401)

No vehicle shall be equipped with, nor shall any person use upon a vehicle, any siren, whistle, or bell, except as permitted for authorized emergency vehicles.

DRIVER RESPONSE TO EMERGENCY VEHICLE SIGNALS

(MCA 61-9-402)

When a police vehicle, authorized emergency vehicle, and emergency service vehicle are operating emergency signal equipment as follows:

- Police vehicle - Siren and/or Red or Blue Flashing or Rotating Lights, or Flashing or Rotating Amber Lights; or
- Authorized Emergency Vehicle - Siren and/or Flashing or Rotating Red Lights, or Flashing or Rotating Amber Lights

The drivers of other vehicles have the obligation to yield right-of-way and/or pull over and stop at the right edge of the road when they see or hear an emergency vehicle approaching from any direction. Drivers should signal and move into the passing lane to pass a traffic stop or crash. If the vehicle displaying the emergency signal is stopped, drivers should only proceed past such signal or light with caution and at a speed that is no greater than is reasonable and proper under the conditions existing at the point of operation.

MUD FLAPS REQUIRED

(MCA 61-9-407)

Trucks, buses, truck trailers, trailers/semi trailers, or pole trailers, or vehicles of 8000 pounds or less GVW shall have fenders, splash aprons, or flaps on the rear most wheels or set of wheels, that extend down to a point not more than 20 inches above the surface of the highway, when the vehicle is empty.

SAFETY CHAINS

(MCA 61-9-208)

Every trailer, semi trailer or pole trailer of 3000 pounds GVW or less must have on the front a steel chain or cable, which shall be fastened securely to the towing unit. Such chain or cable shall be no less than 1/4 inch in diameter.

CERTAIN VEHICLES TO CARRY FLARES OR OTHER WARNING DEVICES

(MCA 61-9-411)

Every truck of one ton capacity or larger, passenger bus and truck tractor must be equipped with at least three flares, or three red electric lanterns, or three portable red reflectors. All must be capable of being seen at a distance of not less than 600 feet under normal atmospheric conditions at night. Reflectors used must display a minimum of 24 square inches of reflective surface and at least three red fuses (if red reflectors or red lanterns are not carried) and two red cloth flags at least 12 inches square with standards to support and display such flags.

Note: Vehicles transporting explosives, flammable liquids, compressed gases, or using compressed gases as a fuel may not carry any warning device, which produces a signal by flame.

As an alternative to the equipment required above, three emergency reflective triangles conforming to USDOT Motor Vehicles Safety Standard 125 may be carried.

DISPLAY OF WARNING DEVICES WHEN VEHICLES DISABLED

(MCA 61-9-412)

Whenever any truck, passenger bus, tractor, trailer, semi trailer or pole trailer is disabled on the highway or shoulder of the highway when lighted lamps are required, the following warning devices shall be displayed:

A warning device as previously described shall be immediately placed at the traffic side of the vehicle in the direction of approaching traffic. Then place warning devices as follows:

- 1 - 100 feet (200 feet if divided highway) in back of the vehicle in the center of the lane occupied by the vehicle;
- 1 - 100 feet in the front of the vehicle (same direction if divided highway) in the center of the same lane; and
- 1 - at the traffic side of the vehicle not less than 10 feet, in the direction of nearest approaching traffic.

Whenever any of the above vehicles is disabled within 500 feet of a curve, hill or other obstruction to view, the warning signal in that direction shall be placed no less than 500 feet from the vehicle and so as to afford ample warning to approaching traffic.

Whenever any of the above vehicles is disabled on a roadway when the above warning devices are not required, the driver shall display two red flags in the lane occupied by the disabled vehicle or at a distance of 100 feet to the front and rear of the vehicle.

Whenever any motor vehicle transporting explosives, flammable liquid or compressed gas, or any vehicle using compressed gas as fuel, is disabled at any time or place mentioned above, the driver shall immediately display one red electric lantern or portable red emergency reflector at the traffic side of the vehicle, one red electric lantern or portable red reflector 100 feet to the front and one red electric lantern or portable red reflector 100 feet to the rear of the vehicle in the center of the traffic lane occupied by the disabled vehicle.

Flares, fuses or signals produced by flame shall NOT be used as warning devices for vehicles transporting explosives, flammable liquids or compressed gases or vehicles using compressed gas as fuel.

SLOW MOVING VEHICLES

(MCA 61-9-415)

Any slow-moving vehicle or equipment, animal drawn vehicle, or road construction or maintenance machinery normally operating at or under 25 miles per hour must display an emblem on the rear of such vehicles as described below, except for road construction or maintenance machinery engaged in actual construction or maintenance work and guarded by a flagman or warning signs.

The emblem shall be a triangle of fluorescent yellow-orange color with a base of 14” and 14” in height. The triangle shall have a border with reflective red stripes one and three-quarters inches wide and shall be mounted in the center of the rear of the vehicle at a height of three to five feet above the roadway.

On a two-lane highway when the slow-moving vehicle does not leave a clear lane for overtaking traffic and passing vehicles, the slow-moving vehicle shall, at the first safe opportunity, with sufficient room for turnout, pull over to allow the vehicle to pass.

Clean Glass Surfaces

It is important that you are able to see clearly through the windows, windshield, and mirrors. Here are some things you can do to help:

- Keep the windshield clean. Bright sun or headlights on a dirty windshield make it hard to see. Carry liquid cleaner and a paper or cloth towel so you can clean your windshield whenever it is necessary.
- Keep your window washer bottle full. Use antifreeze wash in areas where the temperature could fall below freezing.
- Keep the inside of your windows clean, especially if anyone has been smoking in the vehicle. Smoking causes a film to build up on the inside glass.
- Clear snow, ice or frost from *all windows*. Clean the front, sides and back before you drive.
- Do not hang things from your mirror or clutter up the windshield with decals. They could block your view.
- Keep the headlights, backup, brake and taillights clean. Dirt on the lenses can cut the lights' effectiveness by 50%.

Adjust Seat and Mirrors

You should always check your seat and mirrors before you start to drive. Many vehicles have multiple drivers who are different sizes.

- Adjust your seat so that you are high enough to clearly see the road. If necessary, use a seat cushion. Do not move the seat so far forward that you cannot easily steer.
- Adjust your rear view mirror and side mirrors. You should be able to see out the back window with the rear view mirror, and to the sides with the side mirrors. A good adjustment for the side mirrors is to set them so that when you lean forward slightly, you can see the side of your vehicle.
- If you have a day/night mirror, make sure it is set for when you are driving.
- Head restraints are designed to prevent whiplash if you are hit from behind. They should be adjusted so the head restraint contacts the back of the head.

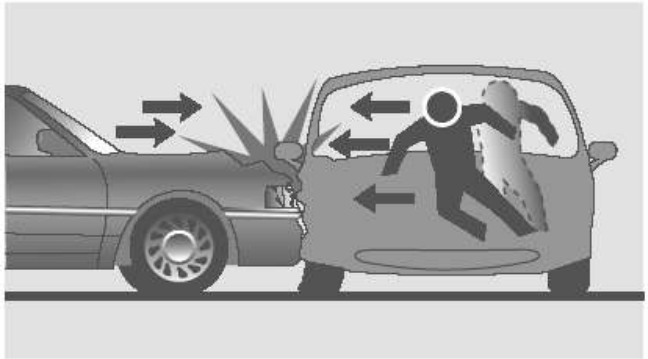
Use Safety Belts and Child Restraints

(MCA 61-9-419 & 61-9-420; 61-13-103)

Buckle up – every trip, every time – even on short trips at low speeds. Before you drive away, always fasten your safety belts and make sure all your passengers are using safety belts or child restraints at all times. Also, remember to lock the vehicle’s doors.

It is important that you and your passengers use safety belts. Studies have shown that if you are in an accident and are using safety belts, your chances of being hurt or killed are greatly reduced. A quick click is all it takes to save lives.

No driver may operate a motor vehicle upon a highway of the state of Montana unless EACH OCCUPANT of a designated seating position is wearing a properly adjusted and fastened seatbelt. Montana law places responsibility on the driver to ensure each occupant is properly buckled or in a child safety seat. A driver who violates the law will be fined $20.00.

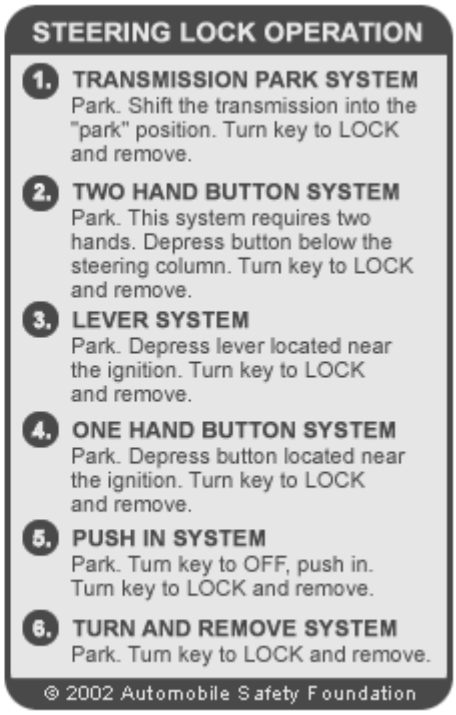


Exceptions to the previous statements include:

- If the vehicle was manufactured prior to January 1, 1968.
- If an occupant POSSESSES a written statement from a physician that he/she is unable to wear a seatbelt for medical reasons.
- If you are an operator of a vehicle licensed as special mobile equipment (vehicle not designated or used primarily for the transportation of persons or property and incidentally operated or moved over the highways, including farm tractors, road construction or maintenance machinery, ditch digging apparatus, concrete mixers and other such vehicles which are within the general terms of MCA 61-1-104).
- If a child 6 years of age and weighing less than 60 pounds is a passenger in a motor vehicle, that motor vehicle must be equipped with one child safety restraint for each child in the vehicle, and each child must be properly restrained.
- If you are a person who makes frequent stops with a motor vehicle in your official job duties, you may be exempted by the Department of Justice. The department has adopted rules to provide for this exemption. See Form MVDSE-1 (www.doj.mt.gov/driving/forms.asp).

If your vehicle has a two-part safety belt system, be sure to wear both the lap belt and shoulder belt. Wearing either part alone greatly reduces your protection. If you have an automatic shoulder belt, be sure to buckle your lap belt as well. Otherwise, in a collision you could slide out of the belt and be hurt or killed.

Air bags are only part of a total occupant protection system. Children in the front seat of an air bag equipped car should be secured in a child safety or booster seat or by the car's lap belt. This will hold them in place for air bag protection in a frontal crash, while protecting them against side, rear and rollover collisions. *Whenever possible, children riding in air bag equipped vehicles should be secured in a passenger rear seat.*



MINI - QUIZ

Headlights are required at any time you cannot see persons or vehicles for 500 (because of snow, dust, etc.) and:

- ☐ When traffic is very heavy.
- ☐ During daylight savings time.
- ☐ From 1/2 hour before sunset to 1/2 hour after sunrise.
- ☐ From 1/2 hour after sunset to 1/2 hour before sunrise.

A leaking exhaust system can:

- ☐ Cause excessive oil use.
- ☐ Make your vehicle need a tune-up sooner than normal.
- ☐ Make you drowsy while driving.
- ☐ Set grass fires on country roads.

Upon hearing a siren of an emergency vehicle, a driver must:

- ☐ Stop quickly where he is.
- ☐ Stop and wait for a red or green light.
- ☐ Stop at the right side of the street or roadway.
- ☐ Increase speed and keep out of the way of the emergency vehicle.

Turn signals must be visible for:

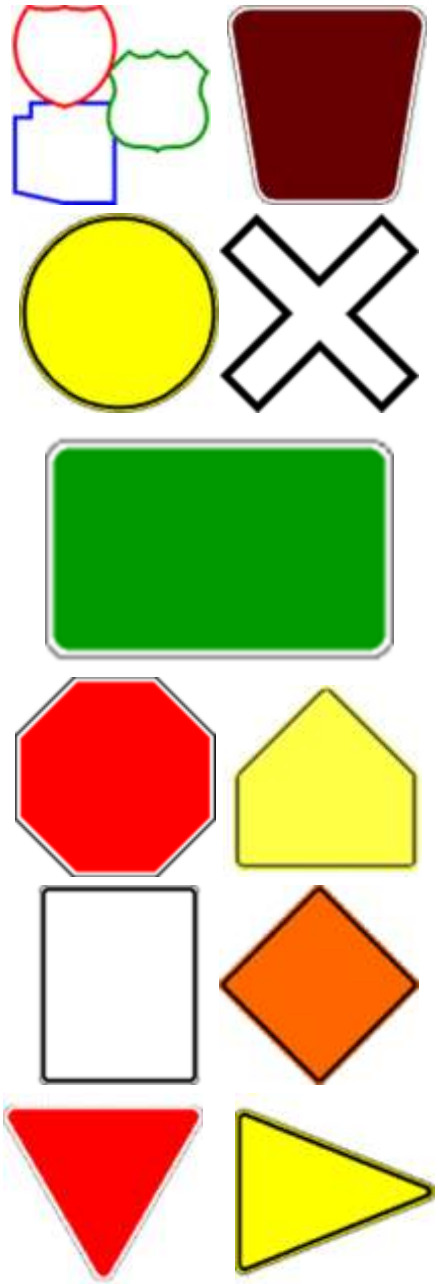
- ☐ 500 feet
- ☐ 250 feet
- ☐ 300 feet
- ☐ Only visible at night

SECTION 4 - LANGUAGE OF THE ROAD

The language of the road is spoken in signs, signals and pavement markings. It is a language you must know well if you are to drive safely.

Know Signs by Their Shape and Color

Each type of sign has a special color to help you recognize the sign at a glance. The colors are illustrated below. In addition to color, the shape of a traffic sign also helps you identify the sign and what you must do to obey it. In poor visibility conditions, such as heavy fog, you may be able to make out only the shape of a sign. It is important for drivers to get to know both the colors and shapes of highway signs.



Red - used for STOP and YIELD signs, multiway supplemental plates, DO NOT ENTER and WRONG WAY signs, for legend or symbols on some regulatory signs, and as part of Interstate and some state route markers

Yellow - used as background color for warning signs (except temporary signs) and school signs

Fluorescent Pink - used as background color for incident management signs

Fluorescent Yellow-Green - used as background color for pedestrian, bicycle, and school warning signs

White - used as background color for most regulatory signs and some route markers, and as legend color on signs with red, green, blue, brown, and black backgrounds

Orange - used as background color for temporary traffic control signs

Green - used as background color for guide and information signs, and for legend on permissive regulation and parking signs

Blue - used as background color for traveler services information signs, emergency evacuation route signs, and as part of Interstate and some state route markers

Brown - used as background color for guide and information signs related to points of recreational or cultural interest

Black - used as background color for ONE WAY, night speed limit, and truck regulatory signs, and as legend color on signs with white, yellow, orange, fluorescent pink, and fluorescent yellow-green backgrounds

Signs, Signals and Road Markings

The United States is moving toward an international-type system of traffic control devices, which emphasize picture and symbolic signs rather than written messages.

Illustrated on the next few pages you will find these new signs along with their counterparts, some of which will be in use for some time. Changes to the new signage are being made only when the old style signs are replaced due to repairs or maintenance.

A thorough knowledge of traffic signs, signals and road markings is necessary for all drivers. You must be able to recognize and obey these Signs of Life without hesitation.

Signs, signals and road markings are placed on our highways to inform, warn and regulate drivers. They must be obeyed; violators will be arrested.

The types of traffic signs are classified according to function. They are regulatory, warning and information guide signs.

SIGNS

Intersection Traffic Control Signs

Intersections may be dangerous. Traffic control devices, such as signs that prohibit certain actions or movements, are shown in this section.

These signs help increase safety by controlling the flow of traffic through intersections. Remember: red always means stop, yield, do not enter, or wrong way.

The STOP sign is the only eight-sided traffic sign. It means that you must come to a complete stop before entering the intersection ahead and yield to traffic close enough to be an immediate hazard. If there is a crosswalk, stop before entering it.

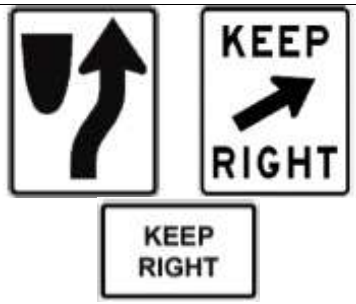
The YIELD sign means slow down to a reasonable speed and yield right-of-way to all vehicles on the roadway being entered.

The DO NOT ENTER square means the road ahead is a one-way roadway, or all vehicular traffic is not permitted. *DO NOT ENTER.*

The signs below prohibit certain actions. When you see a sign with a red circle and a red slash mark across a black arrow or symbol, it means don't do whatever is shown.

Regulatory Signs

The following signs tell you what to do. They show the driver's maximum speed or other required action. The signs shown are examples of regulatory signs, but there are many more such signs in use. Regulatory signs are rectangular with black words or symbols on a white background. You must obey the rules on all regulatory signs.

 DO NOT PASS You must not pass any other vehicles going in the same direction as you are while you are in this area.	 **DO NOT ENTER** The road ahead is a one-way roadway, or all vehicular traffic is prohibited.	 **PASS WITH CARE** When you have passed this sign, you are again permitted to pass other vehicles with care.
 NO U TURN You cannot turn about to go in the opposite direction at this intersection.	 **NO LEFT TURN** You must not make a left turn at this intersection.	 **KEEP RIGHT** Traffic is required to keep to the right of obstruction.
 SPEED LIMIT This indicates the maximum speed limit that you may travel on the road from where this sign is posted, until a different speed sign is posted. Since visibility is limited at night, your speed may be limited also.	 **SPEED ZONE AHEAD** You are approaching an area where a reduced speed limit has been established.	

Warning Signs

Warning signs are black and yellow. These signs are used to warn you of dangerous conditions ahead where you are required to drive with great caution. Warning signs are usually diamond shaped. However, the "railroad crossing ahead" sign is round. It is the only round warning traffic sign. There are many different warning signs, not all of which are shown here:

Crossroad A four-way intersection is ahead. Be alert for cross traffic entering the roadway.	**Winding Road** The road ahead is winding with a series of turns or curves.	**T Intersection** You cannot go straight ahead. Road turns to both right and left.	**Side Road (angled)** There is a side road ahead that enters the highway at an angle.	**Side Road** There is a side road ahead that enters the highway ahead from the right.
Sharp Right Turn There is a sharp turn to the right in the road ahead.	**Sharp Left and Right Turn** The road ahead turns sharply to the left, then right.	**Right and Left Curves** The road ahead curves to the right and then the left.	**Railroad Crossing** There is a railroad crossing ahead.	**Narrow Bridge** The bridge ahead is narrower than the road you are on. However, there is room to meet and pass.
School Ahead There is a school ahead. Slow down and watch for children at all times.	**Loose Gravel** The highway ahead is covered with loose gravel.	**One Lane Bridge** There is not room on the bridge to meet or pass another car or truck.	**Range Cattle** Where there are no fences, cattle and horses may be on the highway.	**Road Narrows** The road ahead is not as wide as the road you are on; however, there is room to meet and pass.
Icy Road This sign is used whenever the road is icy and dangerous.	**Narrow Bridge** The bridge ahead may be too narrow to meet or pass a truck. You must be careful.	**School Bus Stop Ahead** This sign warns you that there is a school bus stop ahead. Begin slowing now.	**Stop Ahead** There is a stop sign ahead. Begin slowing now.	
				Right Curve (with safe speed indication) There is a curve ahead to the right. A suggested safe speed for the curve may appear just below the sign.

School Crossing Ahead
You are approaching a school crossing. Slow down and watch for children at all times.

School Crossing
School children cross the roadway at this point. You must stop if pedestrians are waiting to cross.

Pedestrian Crossing
Be alert for people crossing your path. Slow down and be prepared to stop.

Low Clearance
The overpass has a low clearance. Do not proceed if your vehicle is too tall to pass under.

Hill
A steep grade is ahead. Check your brakes. You may need to shift into a lower gear.

Divided Highway Begins
A median or divider ahead splits the highway into two separate roadways, and each roadway is one-way. Keep to the right.

Divided Highway Ends
The highway ahead becomes a single roadway with traffic going in both directions. Keep to the right.

Deer Crossing
Deer often cross the highway in this area. Be alert. Slow down if you see a deer.

Cattle Crossing
A highway quite often splits a farm. This sign indicates a point where the stock is driven from one area to another.

Slippery When Wet
The pavement is unusually slick when wet. Reduce your speed; do not brake hard or change directions suddenly. Increase the distance between your vehicle and the vehicle in front of you.

Construction and Maintenance Signs

Various traffic control devices are used in construction and maintenance work areas to direct drivers or pedestrians safely through the work zone and to provide for the safety of the highway workers.

The most commonly used traffic control devices are signs, barricades, drums, cones, tubes, flashing arrow panels and flag persons. Orange is the basic color for these devices.

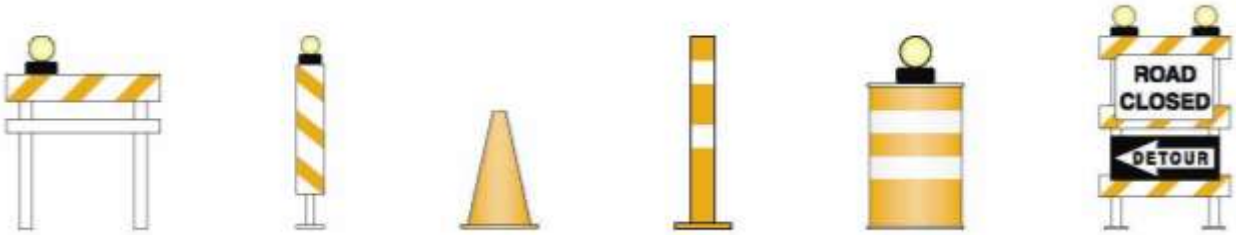
Signs

Construction and maintenance signs are used to notify drivers of unusual or potentially dangerous conditions in or near work areas. Most signs in work areas are diamond shaped. A few signs are rectangular. They are warning the highway ahead is being repaired, approach with caution. Also, there are men and women working ahead.

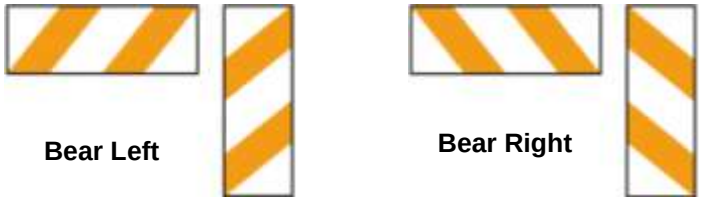
It is a violation to exceed the posted speed in construction and work zones. The fines for violation of a work zone are double the amount. In addition, a person who knowingly or negligently drives a motor vehicle in a highway construction zone in such a manner as to endanger persons or property, or if a person purposely removes, ignores or intentionally strikes a traffic control device, is guilty of a misdemeanor and the penalty is the same as reckless driving.

Devices

Barricades, vertical panels, drums, cones and tubes are the most commonly used devices to alert drivers of unusual or potentially dangerous conditions in highway and street work areas and to guide drivers safely through the work zone. At night these devices are often equipped with flashing or steady burning lights.

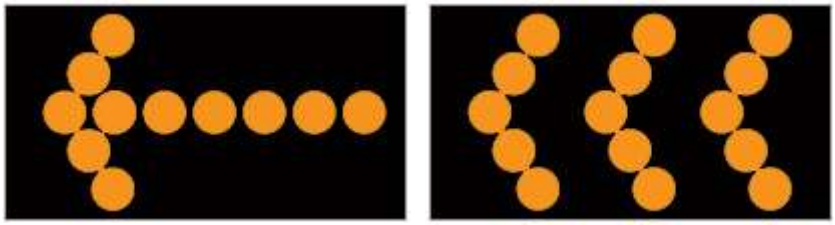


The diagonal stripes on the barricade or vertical panel guide the driver toward the direction to which traffic is to pass. Stripes sloping downward to the right mean the driver should bear to the right. Conversely, stripes sloping downward to the left mean bear to the left.



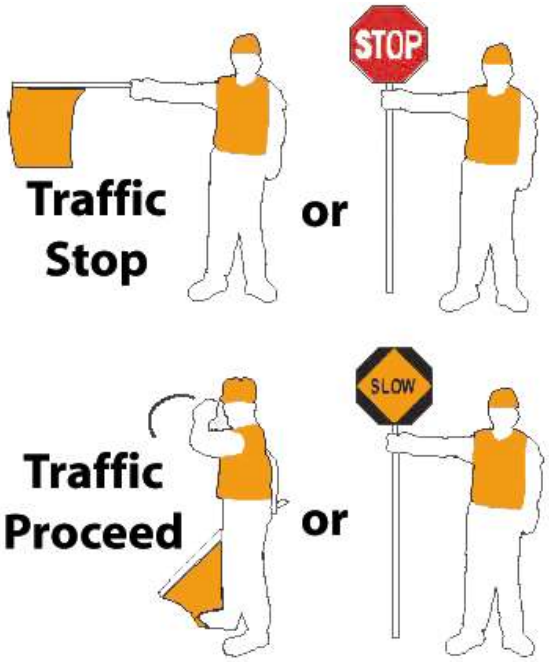
Flashing Arrow Panels

Large flashing or sequencing arrow panels may be used in work zones both day and night to guide drivers into certain traffic lanes and to inform them that part of the road or street ahead is closed.



Flag Persons

Flag persons are often provided in highway and street work zones to stop, slow down or guide traffic through the area. Flag persons wear orange vests, shirts or jackets and use red flags or stop/slow paddles to direct traffic through work zones.



CONSTRUCTION ZONE

There is no longer a set 35 mph speed limit in construction or work zones. The Department of Transportation, local authority, utility company, or private contractor sets the speed limit. **If convicted of a traffic violation in a work zone, the fine is doubled.** You may also be charged with Reckless Endangerment of a Highway Worker if you knowingly or negligently drive a motor vehicle in a highway construction zone in such a manner as to endanger persons or property, or remove, ignore or intentionally strike a traffic control device.

School Zone Safety Standards

Pedestrian safety depends upon your understanding of accepted methods for traffic controls. Driver awareness is especially important in the vicinity of schools and school safety corridors. Lack of driver awareness and confusion of local traffic laws prompt wrong decisions and result in accidents and injuries in school zones. Drivers must be aware that children are not as aware of motor vehicle traffic and have minimal perception of car speeds and distances. Children may dash in and out of traffic, from between parked cars, they may be running to school or trying to catch up to other classmates without much regard for traffic, and this can result in injury or even death from carelessness if the driver is not alert, especially around school zones. Drivers must be watchful for the unexpected and drive defensively.

School Area

Those streets, highways and grounds abutting the grounds of active educational institutions, which include school property.

School Zone

School zones are intended and in place to protect the safety of students and all those attending or visiting school areas. All school zones are unique by nature. Some schools may develop additional policies or procedures specific to their area. Therefore, to help maintain children's safety in these school zones, watch for changes in traffic flow patterns or limits for loading or unloading of students in designated areas. Be familiar with your local traffic procedures and policies, especially in and around school zones.

School Crossings

Drivers must **always** yield to pedestrians in school crosswalks. There may or may not be school crossing guards to assist with safe pedestrian crossing. Drivers who stop too closely to crosswalks, especially multi-lane approaches, place pedestrians at risk of injury or safety by blocking other drivers' views of pedestrians and that of other vehicles.

School Speed Limit

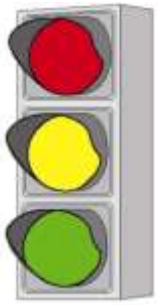
School speed limit signs shall be used to indicate posted speeds or where reduced speeds have been authorized by local authorities. Watch for signs, markings and/or flashing lights as indicators of speed limit changes.

Parking and Stopping

Signs may be used to prevent parked or waiting vehicles from blocking both driver and/or pedestrians' views, and to increase visibility of school zones.

Fines

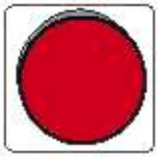
Montana law enforces a strict policy on speed violations in or near school zones. Fines are doubled in all school zones throughout Montana.



Traffic Signals

Traffic signals are used to control drivers of vehicles and pedestrians at some intersections and mid-block crosswalks. Signals promote better movement of traffic on busy roads by assigning right of way. Generally, if a signal is not working, stop as you would if there were stop signs in all directions. Common courtesy says the driver who stops first should get to go first. However, stay cautious and be sure it is safe to proceed even when you are the first vehicle to reach the intersection.

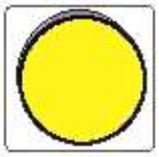
VEHICLE SIGNALS



A **steady red signal** means “STOP.” Stop before a stop line on the pavement. If there is no stop line, stop before entering the nearest crosswalk or before entering the intersection if there is no crosswalk. When entering a two-way street, you may cautiously turn right after stopping. You may make the right turn unless a sign or police officer tells you not to turn against the red light. Yield to pedestrians, bicyclists, and traffic in the intersection. Look for pedestrians to the right. When entering a one-way street from a one-way street, you may also turn left after stopping for the red light. Yield, if needed. Pedestrians facing a red light must not enter the street unless a pedestrian signal directs otherwise.

A **steady red arrow** means “STOP.” Stop and remain stopped except for allowed turns on red. (Review above)

A **flashing red signal** means the same as a stop sign. Come to a complete stop. Look both ways, yield to traffic and pedestrians and proceed when it is safe to do so.



A **steady yellow signal** means “CAUTION.” Cautiously enter the intersection. The signal is about to turn red. Do not enter an intersection against a steady yellow light unless you are too close to stop safely. Pedestrians facing a yellow light must not start across the street unless a pedestrian signal directs otherwise.

A **steady yellow arrow** means that the time to make a “protected” turn is about to end or stop. Vehicles making a turn should clear the intersection. Be prepared to obey the next signal, which could be the red arrow with a green or red light.

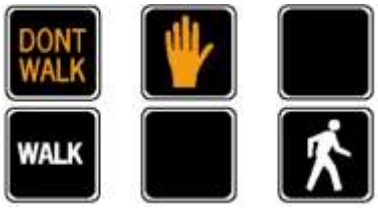
A **flashing yellow signal** means "PROCEED WITH CAUTION." It usually means you need to slow down. If it is a **flashing yellow arrow**, it means left turns are allowed, but you must first yield to oncoming traffic and pedestrians.

A **steady green signal** means “GO.” Cautiously enter the intersection. Look both ways for oncoming traffic that may run the red light. Pedestrians facing a green light may cross the street in a marked or unmarked crosswalk, unless directed by other signs or pedestrian signal.

A **steady green arrow** means that you have a “protected” turning movement. If there is no green arrow, left and right turning traffic is “unprotected” and must yield right of way to oncoming traffic and pedestrians.

PEDESTRIAN SIGNALS

These are special stop and go signals for pedestrians. When used, pedestrians must obey these signals rather than red-yellow-green traffic lights. Pedestrians facing a WALK signal may start from the curb or sidewalk to cross the street. If a DON’T WALK signal is showing or flashing, pedestrians must wait until a WALK signal appears before starting to cross the intersection. Pedestrians who are in the crosswalk when the DON’T WALK signal begins flashing should continue crossing the street. An upheld orange hand means DON’T WALK. A white pedestrian figure means WALK.



Roundabouts in Montana

Roundabouts are circular intersections that incorporate a new design that helps reduce traffic accidents, traffic delays and traffic speeds. The rules below will help you navigate your way through a Montana roundabout:

1. **Slow Down** – Driving speeds in roundabouts are 15 mph or less
2. **Look to the Left** – ***Traffic flows in a counterclockwise direction***. Yield to vehicles that are already in the roundabout; they have the right-of-way.
3. **Stay Right** – Enter the roundabout and stay to the right of the center island. Do not stop if the way is clear. ***Never pass or overtake another vehicle after entering a single lane roundabout.***
4. **Travel Around the Circle** – Travel around the circle until you reach your desired street; use your right-turn signal and exit the roundabout.

Roundabouts are easy to navigate and are safer than traditional intersections. When entering and exiting a roundabout, watch for and yield to pedestrians in or waiting at the crosswalk.

Large Vehicles

Give large vehicles the space they need. Roundabouts are designed to handle all sizes of vehicles, including truck and trailer combinations. The center island of the single lane roundabout is built with a gradually sloped and flat curb, called a truck apron. The rear wheels of a large vehicle will cross over the truck apron. The driver of the smaller vehicle should drop back behind the larger truck as it completes its travel through the roundabout.

Pedestrians

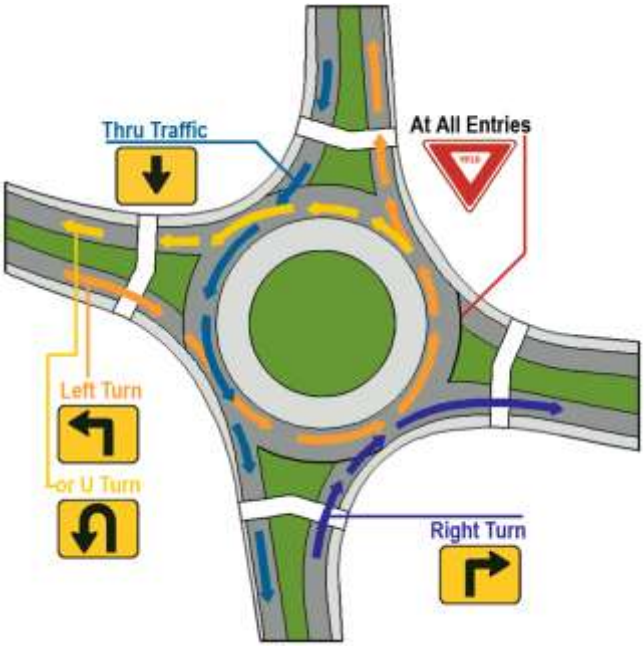
Yield to pedestrians. All pedestrians must cross at the designated crosswalks. Never cross to the central island. Although vehicles are required to stop for pedestrians, pedestrians should always exercise caution when crossing.

Bicyclists

Walk your bicycle and use the crosswalks. Bicyclists are encouraged to walk their bicycles on the sidewalks and use the pedestrian crosswalks. If you are comfortable riding in traffic, ride on the circulatory roadway of the roundabout like a car, but obey the same traffic rules as motorized vehicles. Clearly signal your turning intentions.

Emergency Vehicles

Do not pull over or stop in the roundabout when approached by an emergency vehicle. Continue on and exit as normal, then pull to the right where there is room for the emergency vehicle to pass. If you are approaching the roundabout, pull over if there is room for the emergency vehicle to get by; if there is not room, continue through the roundabout and pull over after exiting.



Railroad Crossing Warning Signs/Signals

Many railroad crossings have signs or signals to warn drivers. Never try to beat a train across the tracks. Stop if there is any question about safety. Never start to cross until there is room for your vehicle on the far side. It is wise not to shift gears when crossing railroad tracks, just in case you might stall.

Public railroad grade crossings have been marked with warning devices for your safety by both highway departments and the railroad companies. Learn what they are and watch for them. With these warning devices and caution on your part, railroad grade crossing crashes should never happen.

You are required to STOP at railroad crossings as close as practicable but not less than 15 feet from the nearest rail when warning signals, crossing gates, stop signs, or human watchmen indicate the approach of a train, or when the train is within 1500 feet of the crossing or if clearly visible and an obvious hazard.

Advance Warning Signs

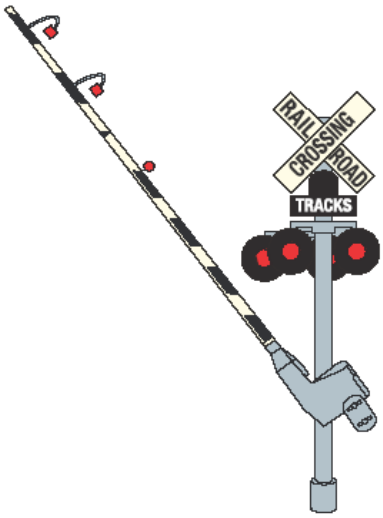
Advance warning signs are located in advance of the crossings. They tell you to slow down, look, listen and be prepared to stop at the crossing ahead.

Pavement Markings

Pavement markings consisting of a STOP LINE, an X and letters RR may be painted on the pavement in front of crossings. This warns you to be alert to the crossing ahead.

Railroad Cross Buck Signs

Railroad cross buck signs will be found at all public crossings. If there is more than one track, a sign below the cross buck indicates the number of tracks. Be prepared to stop at the tracks if a train is coming.



Flashing Light Signals

Flashing Light Signals are used with cross buck signs at many railroad crossings. Always stop when the lights begin to flash. This means that a train is coming. If there is more than one track, make sure all tracks are clear before starting to cross.

Gates

Gates are used with flashing light signals at certain crossings. Stop when the lights begin to flash before the gates lower across your road lane. Remain stopped until the gates are raised and the lights stop flashing.

Road Markings

A broken yellow line as the centerline may be crossed. Don't cross the centerline unless overtaking or passing. A solid yellow line on your side means that you cannot pass over the centerline. A double yellow line may not be crossed by traffic moving in either direction. Crossing a solid centerline is permitted only as part of a left turn maneuver. Heed other pavement markings, such as pedestrian crosswalk strips, warning signs, etc.

Pavement Markings

Lines and symbols on the roadway divide lanes, tell you when you may pass other vehicles or change lanes, which lanes to use for turns, define pedestrian walkways, and where you must stop for signs or traffic signals.

EDGE AND LANE LINES

Solid lines along the side of the road show you where the edge of the road is located. Lines separating lanes of traffic moving in the same direction are white. Lines separating traffic moving in opposite directions are yellow.

White Lane Markings

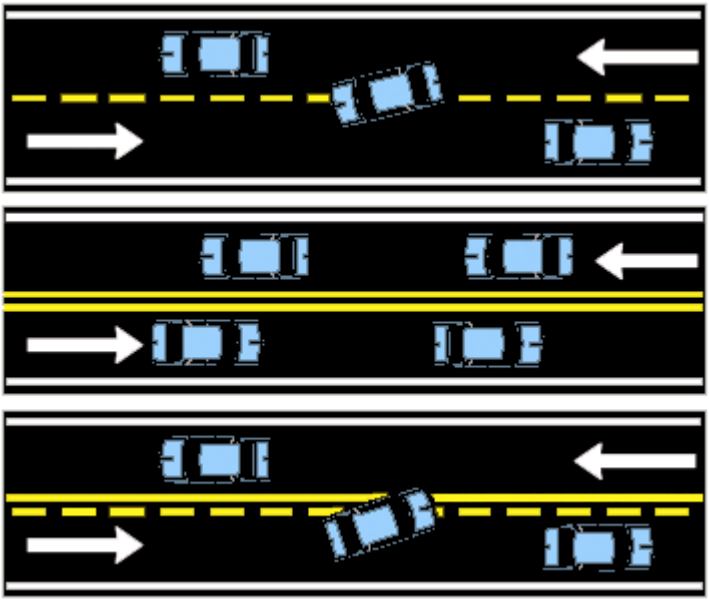
A dashed white line between lanes of traffic means that you may cross it to change lanes if it is safe to do so. A solid white line between lanes of traffic means that you should stay in your lane unless a special situation requires you to change lanes.

Crosswalks and Stop Lines

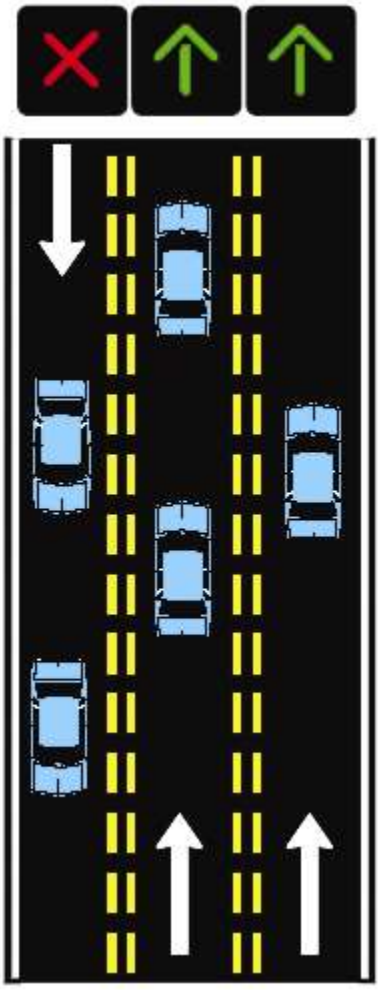
When required to stop because of a sign or signal, you must stop before your vehicle reaches the stop line, or if there is one, a crosswalk. Crosswalks define the area where pedestrians are to cross the roadway. You must yield to pedestrians in or about to enter a crosswalk. Not all crosswalks are marked. Be alert for pedestrians when crossing intersections that do not have defined crosswalks.

Yellow Lane Markings

A dashed yellow line between opposing lanes of traffic means that you may cross it to pass if it is safe to do so. Some passing zones have signs that tell you where you can pass and where you cannot pass. Where there is both a solid and a dashed yellow line between opposing lanes of traffic, you may not pass if the solid yellow line is on your side. If the dashed line is on your side, you may pass if it is safe to do so. Two solid lines between opposing lanes of traffic means neither side can pass. You may cross a solid yellow line to turn into a public or private parking lot, private driveway, or a roadway if it is safe to do so.



OTHER LANE CONTROLS



Reversible Lanes

Some travel lanes are designed to carry traffic in one direction at certain times and in the opposite direction at other times. Double-dashed yellow lines usually mark these lanes. Before you start driving in them, check to see which lanes you can use at that time. There may be signs posted by the side of the road or overhead. Sometimes special lights are used. A green arrow means you can use the lane beneath it; a red “X” means that you may not. A flashing yellow “X” means the lane is only for turning. A steady yellow “X” means that the use of the lane is changing and you should move out of it as soon as it is safe to do so.

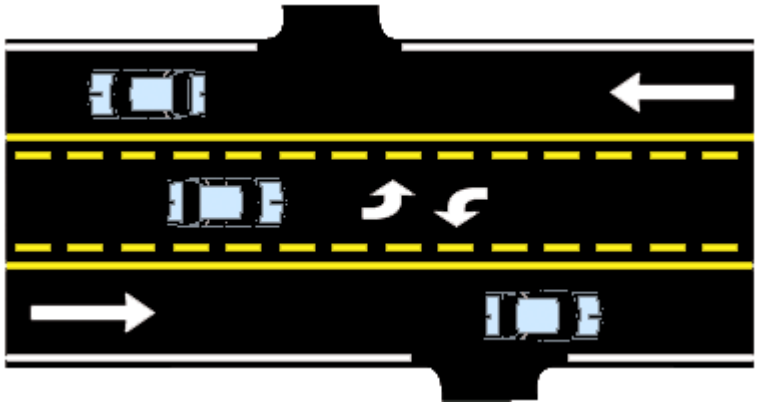
Reserved Lanes

On various roadways, one or more lanes may be reserved for special vehicles. Reserved lanes are marked by signs stating that the lane is reserved for special use, and often have a white diamond posted at the side of the road or painted on the road surface.

- “Transit” or “Bus” means the lane is for bus use only.
- “Bicycle” means the lane is reserved for bicycles.
- “HOV” stands for High Occupancy Vehicles and indicates lanes reserved for vehicles with more than one person in them. Signs say how many people must be in the vehicle, as well as the days and hours to which it applies. For example, “HOV 3” means that there must be at least three people in the vehicle.

Shared Center Lane

These center lanes are reserved for making left turns (or U-turns when they are permitted), but can be used by vehicles traveling in both directions. On the pavement, left-turn arrows for traffic in one direction are alternate with left-hand arrows for traffic coming from the other direction. These lanes are marked on each side by a solid yellow and dashed yellow line.



NO LANE MARKINGS

When there are no signs or lane markings to control the use of lanes, there are rules that indicate which lane is to be used. These rules cover general driving, passing and turning (see Rules of the Road, Section Five).

MINI - QUIZ

The sign pictured at the right means that:

- ☐ There is a bus stop ahead.
- ☐ There is a stop sign ahead.
- ☐ There is a caution sign ahead.
- ☐ You must stop when other cars stop.

The sign pictured at the right means that:

- ☐ You must drive slowly and sound horn.
- ☐ You must watch for children in this area.
- ☐ You must watch for children during school hours.
- ☐ School ahead - slow down and watch for children at all times.

The sign pictured at the right means that:

- ☐ The highway ahead turns only to the right.
- ☐ The highway ahead turns sharply to the right.
- ☐ The highway ahead turns to the right and then the left.
- ☐ The highway ahead turns to the left and then to the right.

The sign pictured at the right means that:

- ☐ Trucks are permitted on a narrow bridge.
- ☐ The bridge ahead is open to one-way traffic only.
- ☐ The bridge ahead is wide enough for one car at a time.
- ☐ The bridge ahead may be too narrow to meet or pass a truck, you must be careful.

The sign pictured at the right means that:

- ☐ There is a detour ahead.
- ☐ You must stop for flagmen.
- ☐ The road ahead is closed to traffic.
- ☐ The highway ahead is being repaired, approach with caution.

The sign pictured at the right means that:

- ☐ There are trucks hauling gravel ahead.
- ☐ The highway ahead is under construction.
- ☐ The highway ahead is covered with loose gravel.
- ☐ The highway ahead has been sanded for icy conditions.

It is permissible to drive a motor vehicle to the left of the centerline of a highway:

- ☐ When overtaking and passing another vehicle.
- ☐ When you have 500 feet of clear road ahead and to the rear.
- ☐ When the shoulder of the road is rough and the ditch is deep.
- ☐ When the road is clear of cars coming from the opposite direction.

The shared center lane is reserved for:

- ☐ Making left turns.
- ☐ U-turns when they are permitted.
- ☐ Can be used by vehicles traveling in both directions.
- ☐ All of the above.

SECTION 5 - RULES OF THE ROAD

GENERAL DRIVING

Never back a vehicle in any travel lane. It is illegal and unsafe to do so. Drivers do not expect a vehicle to be backing toward them and may not realize it until it is too late. If you approach a turn into the wrong lane or have forgotten to signal, you should proceed, get into the proper lane, go to the next intersection, signal and then turn.

Do not stop in travel lanes for any reason (confusion, breakdown, letting out a passenger). Keep moving until you can safely pull off the road.

Stay in the right lane, except to pass, on a road with three or more lanes traveling in the same direction. If there is a lot of entering traffic, then use the center travel lane.

Unless told to do so, never drive on the shoulder of the road.

PASSING

Pass only when it can be done safely. On two-lane roads it is permissible to drive a motor vehicle to the left of the centerline of a highway when overtaking and passing another vehicle. On multi-lane roads the left-most lane is intended to be used to pass slower vehicles. If you pass on the right, the other driver may have difficulty seeing you and might suddenly change lanes in front of you. Never pass on the shoulder, whether it is paved or not. Other drivers will never expect you to be there and may pull off the road without looking.

TURNING

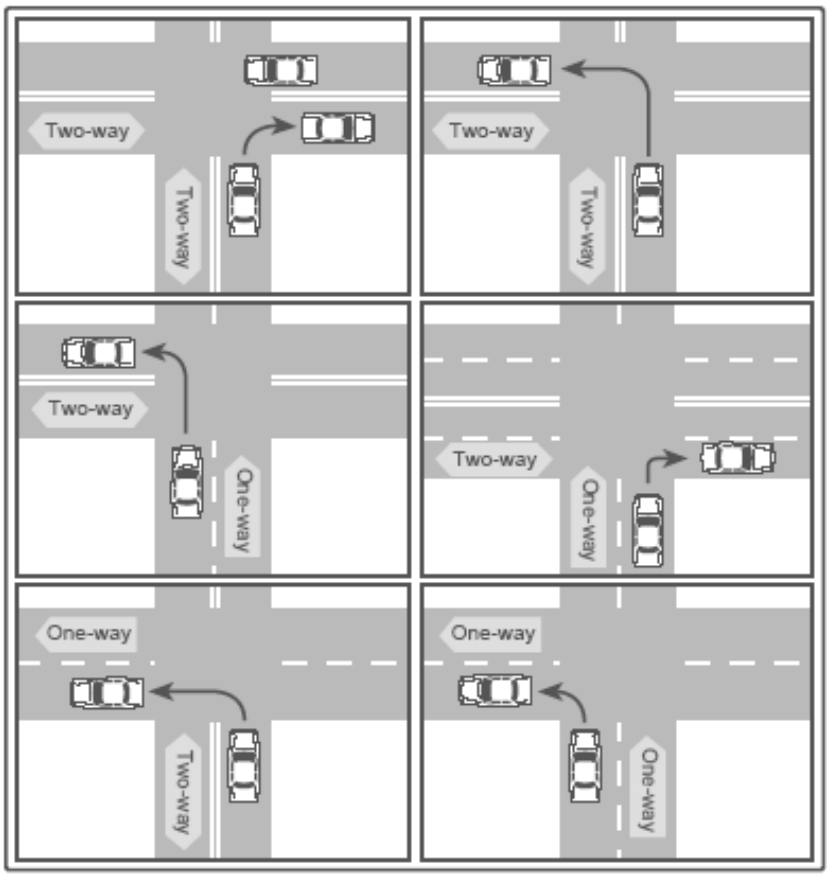
Where there are no signs or lane markings to control turning, you should turn from the lane that is closest to the direction you want to go, and turn into the lane closest to the one you came from. This way, you will cross the fewest lanes of traffic. When making turns, go from one lane to the other as directly as possible without crossing lane lines or interfering with traffic. Once you have completed your turn, you can change to another lane if you need to.

RIGHT TURNS

On right turns, avoid swinging wide to the left before turning to make the turn easier. If you swing wide, the driver behind you may think you are changing lanes or going to turn left and may try to pass you on the right. If you swing wide as you complete the turn, drivers who are in the far lane will not expect to see you there.

LEFT TURNS

When making a left turn, avoid cutting the corner so sharply that you run into someone approaching from the left. However, you must leave room for oncoming vehicles to turn left in front of you.



TURNING AROUND

Common sense should tell us never to try turning around on a busy street or near a curve or hill. Not only is it illegal, but also it is dangerous to turn around in any of these situations. You may turn around on a roadway where the driver has 500 feet in both directions (almost two average city blocks) of unobstructed view and no vehicles are approaching. Remember that most city ordinances prohibit U-turns in the middle of a block and some prohibit U-turns entirely. Above all, remember that no vehicle shall be turned at any time unless it is in the proper lane and it is safe to do so.

RIGHT-OF-WAY

Where vehicles or pedestrians are likely to meet one another, and there are not signs or signals to regulate traffic, there are rules that say who must yield the right-of-way. These rules tell drivers who goes first and who must wait in different traffic situations.

The law says who must *yield* the right-of-way; it does not *give* anyone the right-of-way. You must do everything you can to prevent striking a pedestrian or another vehicle, regardless of the circumstances.

PEDESTRIANS

To a driver, a pedestrian is a hazard - or should that be the other way around? In either case, drivers and pedestrians must share our roadways and each MUST be aware and alert for the other.

Obviously in any conflict between a vehicle and a pedestrian, the pedestrian is going to be the loser. This would seem to indicate that those on foot have the responsibility to stay out of trouble with vehicles. To a certain extent, this is true. These laws are well and good, but it is still the driver's basic responsibility to be alert for pedestrians and to yield the right-of-way, even if the pedestrian is wrong. Just as the fact that a stop sign does not cause a vehicle to stop if the driver ignores it, pedestrian laws don’t keep people off the streets, especially if they are young. Be alert at all times for pedestrians - especially in residential areas where children may be playing.

In addition to simple common sense, there are traffic laws and safety rules, which govern pedestrians:

- Pedestrians using a guide dog or carrying a white cane have absolute right-of-way. Do not use your horn as it could confuse or frighten the blind pedestrian.
- Persons walking along the highway at night should wear light-colored clothing or carry a light.
- When sidewalks or paths are available, pedestrians may not walk on the roadway.
- When persons are walking on the roadway, they must walk on the left (facing on- coming traffic).
- Pedestrians must cross streets at intersections, using crosswalks as provided.
- Pedestrians must obey all traffic laws and rules, which apply to them.

INTERSECTIONS

The following right-of-way rules apply at intersections:

- Drivers shall yield the right-of-way to pedestrians crossing in a crosswalk, but no pedestrian shall leave a curb and walk into the path of a vehicle. Drivers shall exercise care to avoid colliding with any pedestrian. Where sidewalks are provided, it shall be unlawful for pedestrians to walk on the roadway. Pedestrians must obey all traffic rules, signals and signs that pertain to them.
- Drivers crossing a sidewalk, entering or exiting a driveway, alley or parking lot must yield to pedestrians. It is illegal to drive on a sidewalk, except to cross it.
- Drivers turning left must yield to oncoming cars going straight ahead.
- Drivers entering a traffic circle or rotary must yield to drivers already in the circle.
- At an intersection where there is no stop sign or traffic signal, drivers should yield to vehicles coming from the **right**. However, a driver should always be prepared to yield to avoid an accident. Do this by taking your foot off the accelerator, cover the brake, and look left, right and left again.
- At a four-way stop, the driver reaching the intersection first gets to go first (after coming to a complete stop).
- Drivers entering a road from a driveway, alley or roadside must stop and yield to vehicles already on the main roadway.
- Drivers may not enter an intersection unless they can get through it without having to stop. You should wait until traffic ahead clears so that you are not blocking the intersection.
- A yield sign means that you must slow to a reasonable speed and yield right-of-way to **all** vehicles.
- At intersections controlled by a light, unless there is a sign that says you cannot turn right, you may turn right AFTER YOU HAVE STOPPED (if vehicle is in the proper lane) and you have determined it is safe to do so. Montana law also permits turning left from a one-way street to a one-way street under the condition stated above for turning right on red. When you reach a red light and wish to make a right turn and your car is in the left lane, drive to the next intersection, get into the proper lane, and then make the turn.

OVERTAKING VEHICLES

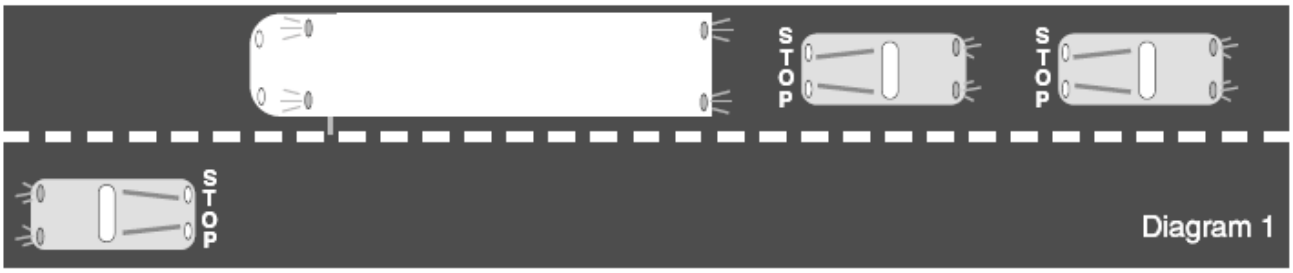
Drivers overtaking a vehicle traveling in the same direction must yield to that vehicle, even if the vehicle is slowing or coming to a stop.

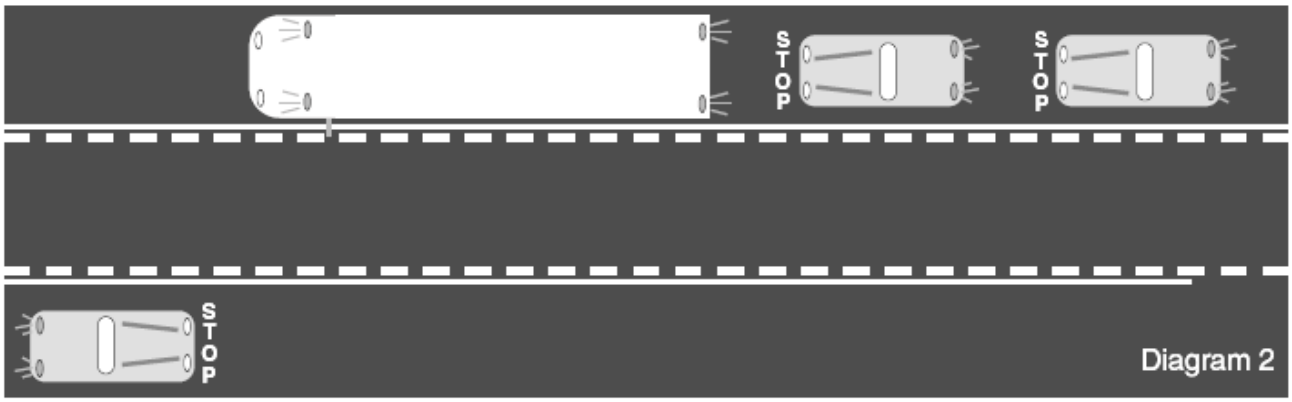
EMERGENCY VEHICLES

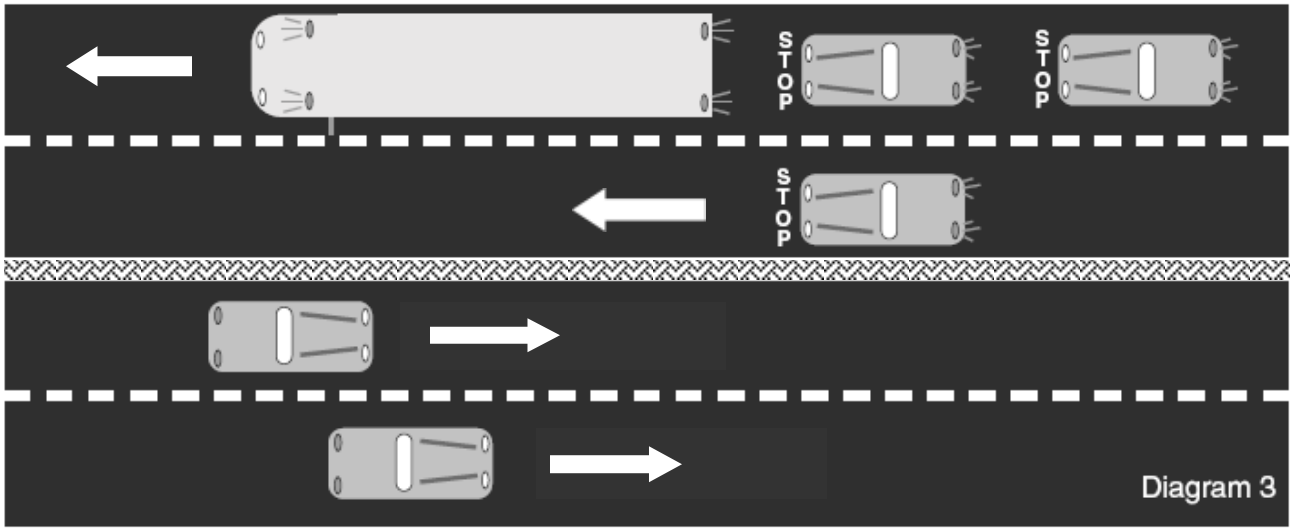
You must yield the right-of-way to a police vehicle, fire engine, ambulance, or other emergency vehicle using a siren or air horn, and a red or blue flashing light. Pull over to the right edge of the road or as near to the right as possible when you see or hear an emergency vehicle approaching from any direction. Follow any instructions given over the emergency vehicle's loudspeaker. Also, stop and remain stopped until the vehicle has passed. If you are in an intersection, drive through the intersection before you pull over and stop.

SCHOOL BUSES

Let's give our children a "brake." Every child is a human caution sign and as unpredictable as Montana's weather. Upon meeting or overtaking from either direction any school bus stopped with its red lights flashing, the driver of a vehicle must stop before reaching the bus and shall not proceed until the red lights have been extinguished (Diagrams 1 and 2). If you approach a bus from either direction that is slowing down in preparation to stop to load passengers, or a bus displaying a yellow flashing light, you must slow down and proceed carefully. Keep in mind that the bus is about to stop and children may be on the roadway. As a driver, you do not need to stop if meeting or passing a school bus that is on a different roadway (Diagram 3), or the bus is stopped in an adjacent loading zone where pedestrians are not permitted to cross the roadway.







When driving past a school, you should slow down and watch for children DAY and NIGHT. They go back to use the playground at all hours. Develop the habit of checking your speed when nearing any school. BE ALERT.

Regarding school bus requirements, stopping at railroad crossings can be found in MCA 61-8-349.

FUNERAL PROCESSION

The state of Montana has some unique right-of-way provisions when driving in or encountering a funeral procession (MCA 61-8-380 through 61-8-384). By state definition, a funeral procession means two or more motor vehicles, including a funeral lead vehicle and a funeral escort vehicle, one of which is carrying the remains of a deceased person, in the daylight hours (MCA 61-1-415).

State law requires that pedestrians and operators of motor vehicles not part of a funeral procession shall yield the right-of-way to a motor vehicle that is part of a funeral procession being led by a funeral lead vehicle or a funeral escort vehicle.

The driver of a vehicle that is not part of a funeral procession cannot drive between the vehicles forming the procession while the procession is in motion unless the driver is authorized to do so by a police officer, or is driving an emergency vehicle. A driver may not join a funeral procession to secure the right-of-way that the procession enjoys, or pass a procession on a multiple-lane highway on the procession's right side unless the procession is in the farthest left lane.

In addition, the driver of a vehicle not part of a procession may not enter an intersection when a funeral procession is proceeding through a red traffic-control device unless that driver can do so without crossing the path of the funeral procession.

When the funeral lead vehicle arrives at an intersection, it must comply with the requirements of any official traffic-control device, right-of-way provision or local ordinance. At the point that the lead vehicle proceeds, others in the procession may follow through the intersection despite any official traffic control device. However, the operator must exercise reasonable care toward any other vehicle or pedestrian.

When driving in a funeral procession, a driver must follow the preceding vehicle as closely as possible. An ordinance, law, or regulation requiring that motor vehicles be operated to allow sufficient space between them to enable another vehicle to enter and occupy that space without danger does not apply to vehicles in a funeral procession.

A driver in a funeral procession may not drive faster than 55 miles per hour on a highway where the speed limit is 55 miles per hour or more, or may not drive more than 5 miles per hour below the posted speed limit on other streets or roads. All headlights and taillights must be illuminated. In addition, turn signals must be flashing simultaneously as warning lights on a vehicle that is the first vehicle in a funeral procession or believed to be the last vehicle in a funeral procession.

A driver in a funeral procession must yield the right-of-way to an approaching authorized emergency vehicle giving an audible or visual signal.

Remember, however, nothing in the state law relieves a driver from the duty to drive with due regard for the safety of all persons using the highway.

BICYCLISTS AND MOTORISTS

SAME ROAD – SAME RULES – SAME RIGHTS

More and more people of all ages are riding bicycles for a variety of reasons, including: health and fitness, enjoyment, energy conservation, and for commuting to work and school less expensively. Bicyclists are not only found traveling on city streets; many are using rural roadways now, as well.

Motorists and bicyclists need to safely and courteously share the roadway with each other. Under Montana law, bicycles are considered vehicles and are governed by the same traffic laws that reasonably apply to their operation. It is important for motorists to realize that bicycles and mopeds travel at a slower speed, and make the appropriate adjustments when passing or sharing the roadway with a bicycle or moped.

Perhaps the most hazardous situation is when a motorist approaches a cyclist from behind on a high-speed, two-lane roadway. In this case, the safest way to proceed in passing the cyclist is to view it as any other legitimate slow-moving vehicle, such as a farm tractor. If there is no oncoming traffic, carefully cross the centerline to give the cyclist a recommended five-feet distance between them and your motor vehicle. If there is oncoming traffic, slow to the speed of the cyclist and wait for it to be safe to pass.

Do not assume that a cyclist is riding on the shoulder of the road; make the assumption that to safely pass the cyclist you will need to wait for a safe time to leave that driving lane in order to pass the cyclist in a safe manner. Also, do not assume a cyclist is riding alone; many times cyclists travel in groups and ride in a single-file line, which will require more time to safely pass all of the cyclists.

Bicyclists are required by law to ride as far to the right as practical; this does not mean, however, the cyclist is always on the shoulder of the roadway. Many bicyclists will often ride further into the lane (approximately 18-24 inches) to discourage motorists from trying to attempt a dangerous in-lane pass; it is recommended that motorists wait for a safe passing zone to pass the bicyclist.

To clarify, Montana law specifies the following for motorists:

- Motorists shall grant people operating bicycles the same rights as the operators of any vehicle legitimately using Montana roadways.
- Motorists may not intentionally interfere with the movement of a person lawfully riding a bicycle.
- Motorists may not overtake and pass a person riding a bicycle unless it can be done without endangering the person riding on the bicycle, or those in any nearby motor vehicle.
- Motorists shall yield the right-of-way to a person riding a bicycle within a designated bicycle lane.

Individuals riding bicycles on a roadway shall ride in single file except when:

- Riding on bike paths or parts of roadways set aside for the exclusive use of bicycles;
- Overtaking and passing another bicycle;
- Riding on a paved shoulder or on a parking lane, in which case the persons may ride two abreast; or
- Riding within a single lane on a laned roadway with at least two lanes in each direction, in which case the persons may ride two abreast if they do not impede the normal and reasonable movement of traffic more than they would otherwise impede traffic by riding single-file.

Bicyclists riding on a roadway at less than the normal speed of traffic shall ride as near to the right side of the roadway as practicable except when:

- Overtaking and passing another vehicle proceeding in the same direction;
- Preparing for a left turn at an intersection or into a private road or driveway; or
- When necessary to avoid a condition that makes it unsafe to continue along the right side of the roadway, including, but not limited to: a fixed or moving object, parked or moving vehicle, pedestrian, animal, surface hazard, or a lane too narrow for a bicycle and another vehicle to travel safely side-by-side within the lane.

- When approaching parked vehicles, many bicyclists will ride far enough away from a vehicle to avoid being “doored.” This term describes a situation when an individual within a parked vehicle suddenly opens their car door without checking for any bicyclists approaching from behind. Frequently, cities place bike lanes next to parking lanes, but bicyclists may be hesitant to use the designated lane due to the danger of being “doored.”

- Most bicycles *are not* equipped with mirrors, so they are often not aware that a motorist is approaching from behind. Always proceed with extra care when bicycles are in traffic. If approaching a bicyclist from behind, assume he/she does not hear or see you in the motorized vehicle.

- When a bicycle is traveling in your lane and you need to make a right hand turn, always check to make sure the bicyclist has either stopped to let you turn, or allow the bicyclist to pass you before making the turn. Bicycles *should* pass on the left, but this is often overlooked due to the bicyclist's comfort in doing so.

- Bicycles are less visible and, unlike motorcycles, *are not* required to have lights during daytime travel.

- Many bicyclists are under the age of 15 and many have not participated in a bicycle safety course or taken the Montana motor vehicle test. They are therefore unaware of many rules of the road, so proceed with extra caution when encountering youngsters on bikes.

- Treat bicyclists with respect. You share the road with bicyclists just as you do any other legitimate user of our roadways. *DO NOT* honk your horn, yell or swerve toward a bicyclist. This may startle the bicyclist and cause a serious crash.

EQUIPMENT AND LIGHTING REQUIRED FOR BICYCLES

Montana law requires that bicycles be equipped as follows:

- When used at nighttime, a lamp on the front, which shall emit white light visible for at least a distance of 500 feet to the front.

- A lamp emitting a red light visible from a distance of 500 feet to the rear may be used in addition to the rear facing reflectors, which are required.

- When used at nighttime, both tires of a bicycle shall be equipped with retro-reflective sidewalls or reflectors mounted on the spokes of each wheel. Spoke-mounted reflectors shall be within 76 mm (3.0 in.) of the inside of the rim and shall be visible on each side of the wheel. The reflectors on the front wheel shall be essentially colorless or amber and the reflectors on the rear wheel shall be amber or red.

- A brake that will enable the operator to make the wheels skid on dry, level, clean pavement.

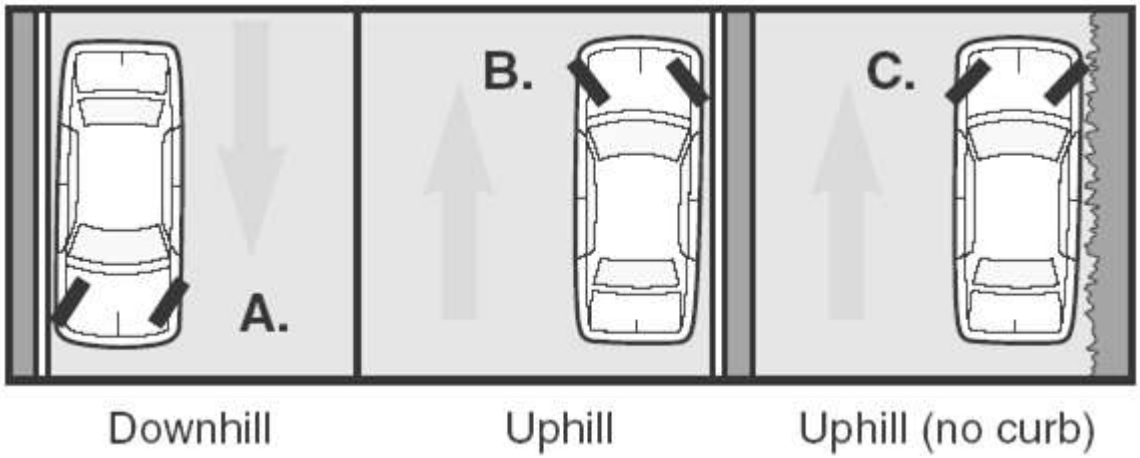
In addition, every bicyclist is encouraged to equip his/her bicycle with a fluorescent orange flag, clearly visible from the rear and suspended not less than 6 feet above the roadway when the bicycle is standing upright.

Many vehicle/bicycle crashes could be avoided. One of the major causes of such crashes is the fact that most motorists do not see the bicyclist. Start now to think “bicycle” just as you do “vehicle” while driving. Pay extra attention as you enter streets, cross bikeways or sidewalks and when you make turns. Watch for children on bicycles who may dart out between parked cars or hedges. Keep in mind that bicyclists are very vulnerable.

PARKING

Drivers are responsible for making sure that their vehicle does not become a hazard after it has been parked. Whenever you park your car, be sure it is in a place that is (1) far enough from any travel lane to avoid interfering with traffic and (2) visible to cars approaching from either direction.

- Always park in a designated area if possible.
- Always set your parking brake when you park. Leave the vehicle in gear if it has a manual transmission, or in “park” if it has an automatic transmission.
- Check traffic before you open the door. Get out of the vehicle on the curbside if you can. If you have to use the street side, check traffic before you get out. Shut the door as soon as you can after getting out.
- Never leave the ignition keys in a parked car. Lock the doors whenever you leave your vehicle if it will be out of your sight at any time.
- If you must park on a roadway, park your vehicle as far away from traffic as possible. If there is a curb, park as close to it as you can.
- When you park on a hill, turn your wheels sharply toward the side of the road. This way, if your car starts to roll downhill it will roll away from traffic.



NO PARKING ZONES

There are many areas where you cannot park. Check for signs that may prohibit or limit parking. Some parking restrictions are indicated by colored curb markings. Do not park:

- Within an intersection
- Within 20 feet of a crosswalk or sidewalk at an intersection
- In a construction area if your vehicle would block traffic
- Within 30 feet of a traffic signal, stop sign, or yield sign
- Within 15 feet of a fire hydrant
- Within 50 feet of a railroad crossing
- More than 18” from the curb
- Within 20 feet of a fire station driveway on the same side of the street, or within 75 feet of a driveway on the other side of the street
- Blocking a driveway, alley, private road, or area of the curb removed or lowered for access to the sidewalk
- On a bridge or elevated structure or in a tunnel or underpass
- On the wrong side of the street
- On the road side of a parked vehicle (double parking)
- On railroad tracks
- Wherever a sign says you cannot park
- In a space marked for the handicapped, unless you have a handicap license plate, tag, or sticker (you may be fined for improper parking in Handicapped Parking Only)

If there is no curb available to stop or park, pull over as close as practicable to the edge of shoulder.

Vehicles parked on a roadway or shoulder during hours of darkness shall have lights front and rear visible for 500 feet. If headlights are on, they shall be dimmed.

MINI - QUIZ

When dealing with pedestrians, a driver must:

- ☐ Make very sure the pedestrian sees him/her.
- ☐ Yield the right-of-way, even if the pedestrian is in the wrong.
- ☐ Always yield the right-of-way when the pedestrian is legally entitled to it.
- ☐ Slow down and sound the horn when entering a heavily congested area.

Upon meeting or overtaking a school bus from either direction that has stopped on the highway with its red lights flashing, a driver must:

- ☐ Stop before reaching the bus and not proceed until the bus has resumed motion.
- ☐ Stop before reaching the bus and not proceed until the red lights have been extinguished.
- ☐ Stop before reaching the bus and proceed only when all children have loaded or unloaded.
- ☐ Stop and not proceed until the way is clear.

When encountering a funeral procession, a driver:

- ☐ May not drive between the vehicles forming the procession unless authorized by a police officer.
- ☐ May not enter an intersection to cross the path of a funeral procession as it is proceeding through a red traffic control device.
- ☐ Must yield the right-of-way to a motor vehicle that is part of the funeral procession.
- ☐ All of the above.

When approaching an uncontrolled intersection, a driver should:

- ☐ Maintain speed and proceed.
- ☐ Stop at the intersection, check all directions, and proceed when safe.
- ☐ Slow down and yield to all drivers.
- ☐ Take his/her foot off the accelerator, cover the brake, look left, right, and left again, and be prepared to yield.

SECTION 6 - SAFE DRIVING TIPS

No driver manual can teach you how to operate a vehicle or be a safe driver. Driving requires skill you can only gain through instruction and practice, and even then it all depends on how you choose to apply what you have learned.

DON'T BE A DISTRACTED DRIVER

All drivers, no matter what age or skill level, need to realize that the human mind can only deal with one task at a time. What is commonly referred to as “multi-tasking” really isn’t. In actuality, your brain is dealing with one task at a time, but shifting between tasks very quickly.

You risk a crash when you try to do something else while you drive and when you look away from the road ahead. It also prevents you from being a defensive driver because you are not as watchful of other drivers when you are distracted.

Young and/or new drivers are especially prone to continuing habits that they have developed and feel they have mastered prior to learning how to drive. The use of a cell phone is a prime example. They feel confident in being able to talk or text while walking, riding a bike, etc., so they also feel confident that they can handle this while driving as well – but they can’t: **no one can** without greatly increasing their risk of an accident.

BE A SAFE DRIVER:

- Don’t use a cell phone or any technical devices while driving
- Don’t adjust your radio, change CDs, etc., while driving
- Don’t allow “horseplay” from passengers or other distracting behavior, e.g., playing music too loudly, dancing, etc. while driving
- Don’t tend to children or pets while driving
- Don’t reach for something on the floor or back seat while driving
- Don’t look at a map or read a book while driving
- Don’t eat or drink, apply makeup, shave, etc., while driving
- Don’t drive when drowsy
- Don’t drive when emotions are running high, whether it be happy, mad or sad

If there are things you think you need to take care of while you are behind the wheel, **wait** until you can safely pull over to the side of the road and STOP.

Always keep your eyes on the road and your hands on the wheel. Remember, it is not only your life in your hands, but also all the lives of those that are affected by your choices.
Buckle up and make sure all your passengers are buckled as well.
Never consume alcohol and drive.

BASIC DRIVING

STARTING

Check the vehicle owner’s manual for the best starting procedures for the vehicle. The procedures vary depending on whether the vehicle has electronic ignition, and on the type of transmission. Make sure the parking brake is on before you start the vehicle.

If the vehicle has a manual transmission, it must not be in gear, and in some vehicles, you must depress the clutch. For a vehicle that has an automatic transmission, you must put the shift selector in “park.” The vehicle will not start otherwise.

ACCELERATING

Accelerate gradually and smoothly. Trying to start too fast can cause the drive wheels to spin, particularly on slippery surfaces, and cause the vehicle to slide. With a manual-shift vehicle, practice using the clutch and accelerator so that the engine does not over-rev or stall when shifting between gears.

STEERING

Use a proper grip. Both hands should be placed on opposite sides of the steering wheel (e.g., at the 9 and 3 o'clock positions or the 8 and 4 o'clock positions of newer vehicles equipped with airbags mounted in the steering wheel). This position is comfortable, and on high-speed roads allows you to make turns without taking your hands off the wheel. This may give you better control in critical situations.

Look well down the road, not just at the road in front of your vehicle. Look for traffic situations where you will need to steer before you get to them. This way, you have time to steer smoothly and safely.

When turning corners, turn the steering wheel using the "hand-over-hand" technique; do not turn the wheel with just the palm of one hand or you could lose control. When you complete a turn, straighten out the steering wheel by hand. Letting it slip through your fingers could be dangerous.

CONTROLLING SPEED

The best way to control your speed is to know how fast you are going. Check the speedometer often. People are not very good at judging how fast they are going. You may be going much faster than you think. This is especially true when you leave high-speed roads and are driving on much slower local roads.

For your information, you will find Montana's posted speeds listed below. FOLLOW THE SPEED LIMIT SIGNS, they are there for your safety.

	CARS and LIGHT TRUCKS		HEAVY TRUCKS *	
	DAY	NIGHT	DAY	NIGHT
Interstate Highways	75	75	65	65
Urban Area Highways**	65	65	65	65
Two-Lane Highways	70	65	60	55
US Highway 93	65	65	60	55

** Trucks in excess of one ton "Manufacturer's Rated" capacity.*
*** Applies to interstates within the Billings, Great Falls and Missoula areas.*

STOPPING

Be alert so that you know when you will have to stop well ahead of time. Stopping suddenly is dangerous and usually points to a driver who was not paying attention. When you brake quickly, you could skid and 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.

SEEING WELL

Most of what you do in driving depends on what you see. To be a good driver, you need to see well. The single biggest contributor to accidents is failing to see what is happening. You must look down the road, to the sides and behind your vehicle, and be alert for unexpected events. At night and at other times when it's hard to see, you must use your headlights. For example, in many crashes with motorcycles, bicycles and pedestrians, drivers reported that they looked but did not see them.

In order to see, drivers must be alert to what is going on around them. Many accidents 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 before you try to look at it. Do not try to read the map while you are driving.

If you have a cell phone or two-way radio, avoid using it when the vehicle is in motion. Even with “hands free” equipment, conversing on a phone or radio takes your attention away from driving and can cause you to be less likely to notice hazardous situations. Do not drive with head or earphones that cover or go in both ears. They make it too hard to hear emergency horns and/or sirens.

Do not rubberneck at crashes, someone getting a ticket, or other roadside activity. Rubbernecking could cause you to be in a crash. If you take your eyes off the road to look at something, you could run into a vehicle ahead that has slowed or stopped. Rubbernecking also can increase congestion. When you pass these roadside activities, keep your eyes on the road and get past them as soon and as safely as you can.

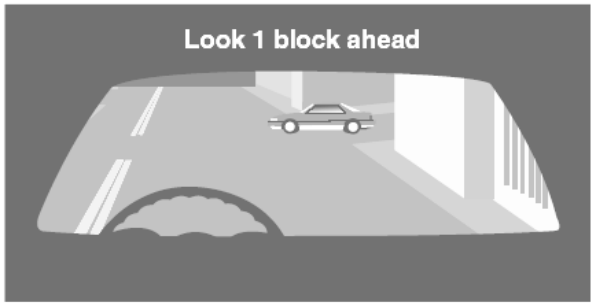
SCANNING

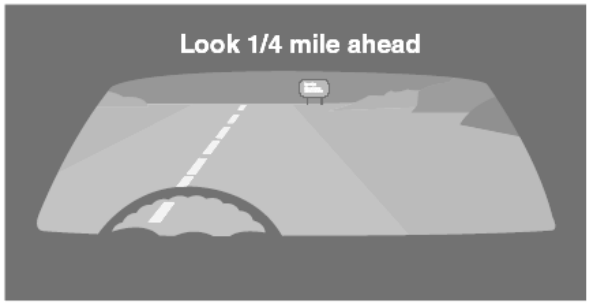
To be a good driver, you must know what is happening around your vehicle. You must look ahead, to the sides and behind your vehicle. Scanning helps you to see problems ahead, vehicles and people that may be in the road by the time you reach them, signs warning of problems ahead, and signs giving directions.

Look Ahead

In order to avoid last minute braking or the need to turn, you should look down the road at least 10 seconds ahead of your vehicle. By looking well ahead and being ready to stop or change lanes if needed, you can drive more safely, save on fuel, help keep traffic moving at a steady pace and allow yourself time to better see around your vehicle and along the side of the road. Looking well down the road will also help you steer straighter with less weaving.

In the city, 10 seconds is about one block. When you drive in city traffic, you should try to look at least one block ahead. On the highway, 10 seconds is about four city blocks or a quarter of a mile.





How do you know how many seconds you are looking ahead? Here is how to figure if you are looking 10 seconds ahead.

1. Find a non-moving object like a sign or telephone pole.
2. Start counting (one-one-thousand, two-one-thousand, three-one-thousand, etc.) until you reach the object.
3. The number of seconds you counted is the number of seconds ahead that you were looking.

You can be a safer driver by looking well ahead. You can avoid the need to stop or turn quickly. The less you have to stop or turn quickly, the less likely you are to run into someone or have someone run into you.

By looking well ahead, you can save on fuel. Every time you have to stop quickly, it takes time and fuel to get your car back up to speed. Drivers who look well ahead and can slow down gradually or change lanes can avoid unnecessary braking that leads to lower miles-per-gallon.

Traffic would flow more smoothly if everyone looked well ahead. Making driving changes before the last moment gives drivers behind you more time to react. The earlier you act, the less often someone behind you has to react quickly to your vehicle. By anticipating driving changes, you can drive more safely, and that helps drivers behind you drive more safely too. This also keeps traffic moving at a steady pace.

Look to the sides

As other vehicles or pedestrians may cross or enter your path anytime, you should look to the sides to make sure no one is coming. This is especially true at intersections and railroad crossings.

Intersections

Intersections are any place where traffic merges or crosses. They include: cross streets, side streets, driveways, and shopping center or parking lot entrances. Before you enter an intersection, look both left and right for approaching vehicles and/or crossing pedestrians. If stopped, look both left and right just before you start moving. Look across the intersection before you start to move to make sure the path is clear through the intersection.

Before you turn left across oncoming traffic, look for a safe gap in oncoming traffic. Look to the street you are turning into to make sure that no vehicles or pedestrians are in your path, leaving you stranded in the path of oncoming traffic. Look one more time in the direction of oncoming traffic before you turn. Unless prohibited, you may turn left from a one-way street onto another one-way street.

Before turning right, make sure that there is no traffic approaching from your left and no oncoming traffic turning left into your path. Do not begin your turn without checking for pedestrians crossing where you will be turning. You may turn right on red unless prohibited.

Do not rely on traffic signals or signs that no one will be crossing in front of you. Some drivers do not obey traffic signals or signs. At an intersection, look left and right even if other traffic has a red light or a stop sign. This is very important just after the light has turned green. This is when people on the cross street are most likely to run the red light in an attempt to get through before the light changes to red. Others who may not stop are individuals who have been drinking or other reckless drivers.

Make sure you can clearly see crossing traffic before entering an intersection. If you were stopped and your view of a cross street is blocked, edge forward slowly until you can see. By moving forward slowly, crossing drivers can see the front of your vehicle before you can see them. This gives them a chance to slow down and warn you if needed.

Whenever there is a lot of activity along the side of the road, there is a good chance that someone will cross or enter the road. Therefore, it is very important to look to the sides when you are near shopping centers and parking lots, construction areas, busy sidewalks, and playgrounds and school yards.

Railroad Crossings

As you approach any railroad crossing, look up and down the tracks to make sure a train is not coming. Do not assume that a train is not coming even if you have never seen one at that crossing before. That is one of the leading causes of fatalities at railroad crossings.

At crossings with more than one track, wait until the passing train is well down the track before starting to cross. Another train could be coming - one that might have been hidden by the one that just passed.

Look Behind

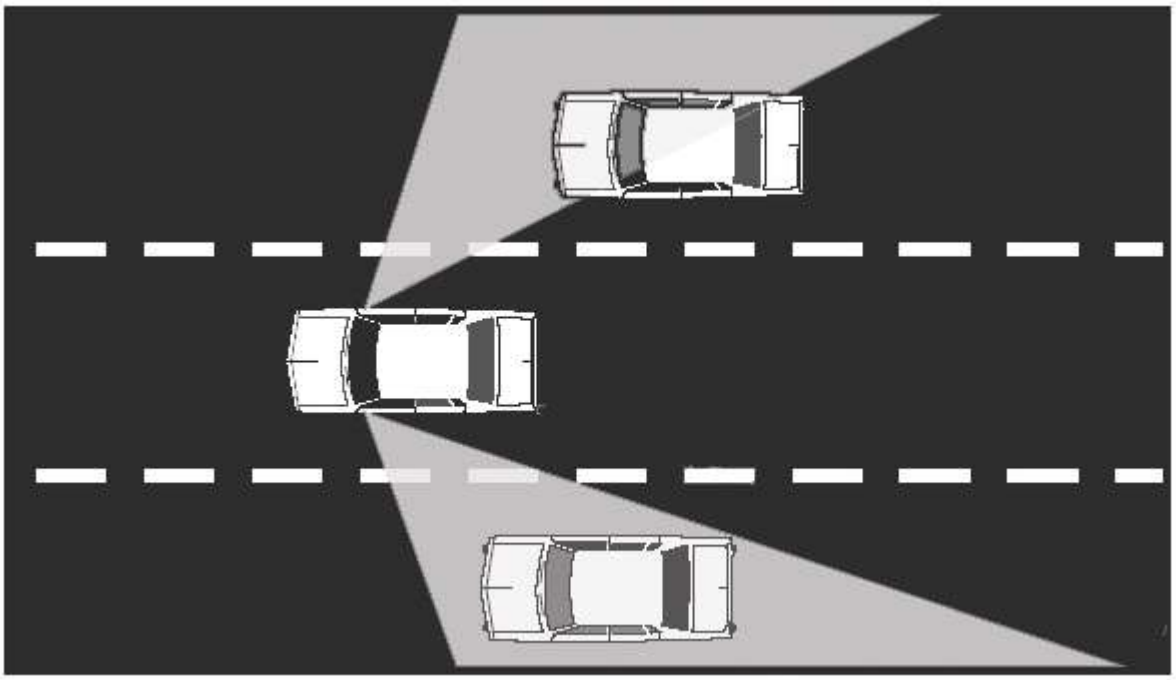
Besides watching traffic ahead of you, you must check the traffic behind you. You need to check more often when traffic is heavy. This is the only way you will know if someone is following too closely or coming up too fast and will give you time to do something about it. It is very important to look behind for vehicles when you change lanes, slow down, back up, or are driving down a long or steep hill.

When Changing Lanes

Whenever you want to change lanes, you must check that there are no vehicles in the lane you want to enter. This means you must check for traffic to the side and behind your vehicle before you change lanes. Changing lanes includes: changing from one lane to another, merging onto a roadway from an entrance ramp, and entering the roadway from the curb or shoulder.

When changing lanes, you should:

- *Use your turn signal to indicate your lane change or merge.* The best way to alert other drivers of your intention to change or merge lanes is by using your turn signal to indicate which lane you will be entering.
- *Look into your rearview and side mirrors*. Make sure there are no vehicles in the lane you want to enter. Make sure that nobody is about to pass you.
- *Look over your shoulder* in the direction you plan to move. Be sure no one is near the rear corners of your vehicle. These areas are called “blind spots” because you cannot see them through your mirrors. You have to turn your head and look.



Light gray areas in the illustration indicate a driver's blind spots.

- *Check quickly.* Do not take your eyes off the road ahead for more than an instant. Traffic ahead of you could stop suddenly while you are checking traffic to the sides, rear or even over your shoulder. Also, use your mirrors to check traffic while you are preparing to change lanes, merge, or pull onto the roadway. This way you can keep an eye on cars ahead of you at the same time. Check over your shoulder just before you change lanes for traffic in your blind spot. Look several times if you need to so as not to look for too long a period at any one time. You must keep track of what traffic is doing in front of you and in the lane you are entering.
- *Check the far lane.* Be sure to check the far lane, if there is one, as someone in that lane may be planning to move into the same lane you want to enter.
- *Check for other road users. Remember that there are other road users such as motorcycles, bicycles, and* pedestrians that are harder to see than are cars and trucks. You should always be cautious when passing a bicycle because the cyclist may have to swerve into traffic to avoid an object on the road. Be especially alert when you are entering the roadway from the curb or driveway.

When You Slow Down

You must check behind your vehicle whenever you slow down. This is very important when you slow down quickly or at points where a following driver would not expect you to slow down, such as private driveways or parking spaces.

When Pulling Away From the Curb

Signal, look over left shoulder and pull out when it is safe to do so.

When You Back Up

It is hard for you to see behind your vehicle. Try to do as little backing up as possible. In a shopping center, try to find a parking space you can drive through so that you can drive forward when you leave. Where backing up is necessary, here are some hints that will help you back your vehicle safely:

- Check behind your vehicle before you get in. Children or small objects cannot be seen from the driver's seat.
- Place your right arm on the back of the seat and turn around so that you can look directly through the rear window. Do not depend on your rearview or side mirrors as you cannot see directly behind your vehicle.
- Back up slowly; your vehicle is much harder to steer while you are backing.
- Whenever possible, use a person outside the vehicle to help you back up.

NIGHT DRIVING

90% of driving decisions are based upon what we see. Because vision is reduced at night, drivers cannot see as well at night, so SLOW DOWN. Night driving requires that you take into account not only the speed limit, but condition of the road, car and weather. Anytime from a half hour after sunset and a half hour before sunrise, or anytime when, due to insufficient light conditions, persons or vehicles are not visible for 500 feet, you shall turn on your headlights.

Headlights on upper beam (bright) shall reveal persons and vehicles for 350 feet, and when on lower beam (dim) for 100 feet. At dusk or on overcast days, you should turn on your headlights. Dim your lights within 1000 feet of meeting a vehicle and within 500 feet when following one. NEVER drive with your parking lights, as oncoming traffic may think that you are stopped. A spotlight may be used just as long as you turn it off when approaching a motor vehicle.

When meeting traffic at night, avoid looking directly at oncoming headlights. Instead, watch the right edge of the roadway and if an oncoming driver flicks his lights at you, check to be sure you have dimmed yours. The law not only requires dimming for approaching traffic, but it is courteous and safer to do so.

Although sunglasses are a big help during the daylight hours, they reduce your visibility dangerously at night. Even tinted and some “photo gray” lenses can detract up to 30% of your night vision. All wearers of tinted lenses should use caution.

If you have mechanical problems or a tire failure, be sure to slow down gently. Make no attempt to pull off the road until your vehicle is under control. Then, move to your right, out of the traffic lane as far as safely possible. If at night, be sure to leave your parking lights on and if your headlights are on, make sure that they are dimmed.

Avoid night driving for long distances. When you are fatigued, stop at least every two hours for a short break, open the window or cold air vent to allow fresh air to circulate throughout the vehicle, sing or play the radio. If you become drowsy, pull off the road and take a nap, or better yet, find a room for the night. It’s better to arrive at your destination a few hours later than never to arrive at all.

COMMUNICATING

Accidents often happen because one driver does not see another driver, or when one driver does something the other driver does not expect. It is important that drivers let other road users know they are there and what they plan to do.

LETTING OTHERS KNOW YOU ARE THERE

Some drivers do not always pay attention to what is going on around them. It is important that other road users know you are there.

Use Headlights

Besides helping you see at night, headlights help other people see you. If needed, flick your headlights to alert other road users you are there. Remember to turn on your headlights whenever you have trouble seeing others. If you have trouble seeing them, they are having trouble seeing you.

- On rainy, snowy, or foggy days, it is sometimes hard for other drivers to see your vehicle. In these conditions, headlights make your vehicle easier to see. Remember, if you turn on your wipers, turn on your headlights.
- Turn on your headlights when it begins to get dark. If you turn them on a little early, you will help other drivers see you.
- Whenever driving and lights are necessary, use your headlights. Parking lights are for parked cars only.
- When driving away from a rising or setting sun, turn on your headlights. Drivers coming toward you may have trouble seeing your vehicle. Your headlights will help them see you.

Use Your Horn

People cannot see you unless they are looking your way. Your horn can get their attention. Use it whenever it will help prevent an accident. If there is no immediate danger, a light tap on the horn should be all you need. Give your horn a light tap:

- When a person on foot or on a bike appears to be moving into your lane of travel.
- When you are passing a driver who starts to turn into your lane.
- When there is a driver who is not paying attention or who may have trouble seeing you.
- When coming to a place where you cannot see what is ahead like a steep hill, a sharp curve, or exiting a narrow alley.

If there is danger, do not be afraid to sound a SHARP BLAST on your horn. Do this when:

- A child or older person is about to walk, run or ride into the street.
- Another car is in danger of hitting you.
- You have lost control of your vehicle and are moving toward someone.

When NOT to Use Your Horn

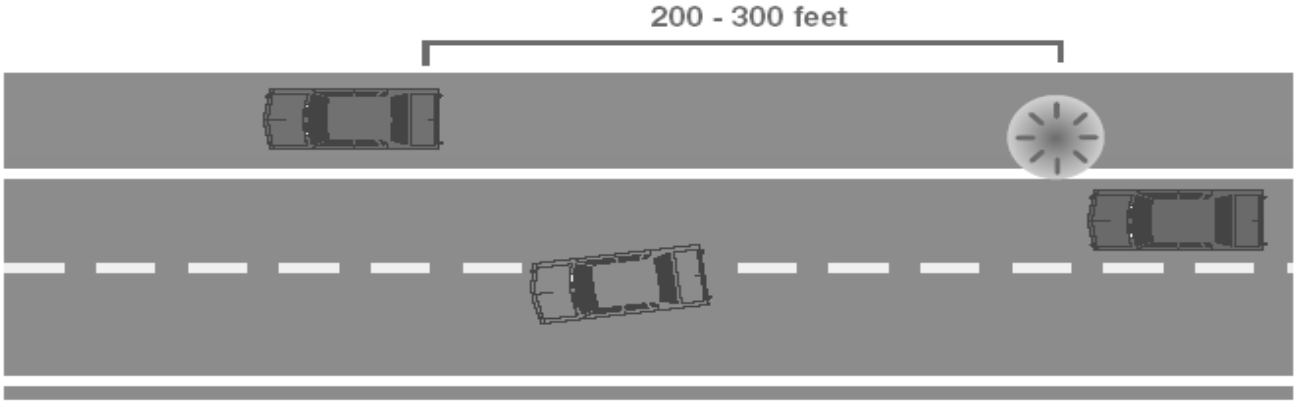
There are several occasions when you should not use your horn. They are:

- To encourage someone to drive faster or get out of the way.
- To apprise other drivers of an error.
- To greet a friend.
- Around visually impaired pedestrians.

Use Emergency Signals

If your vehicle breaks down on a highway, make sure that other drivers can see it. All too often, accidents occur because a driver did not see a stalled vehicle until it was too late to stop. If available, use your two-way radio or telephone to notify authorities that you or someone else has broken down. Many roadways have signs that tell you the CB channel or telephone number to call in an emergency. If you are having vehicle trouble and need to stop:

- 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 road users that your vehicle is there. Place emergency flares behind the vehicle. This allows other drivers to change lanes if necessary.



- If you do not have emergency flares or other warning devices, stand by the side of the road where you are safe and wave traffic around your vehicle. Use a white cloth if you have one.
- Never stand in the roadway. Do not even 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.

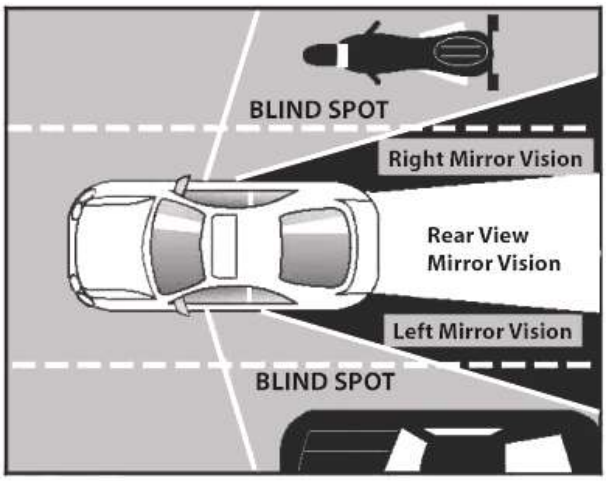
Stay Out of the Blind Spot

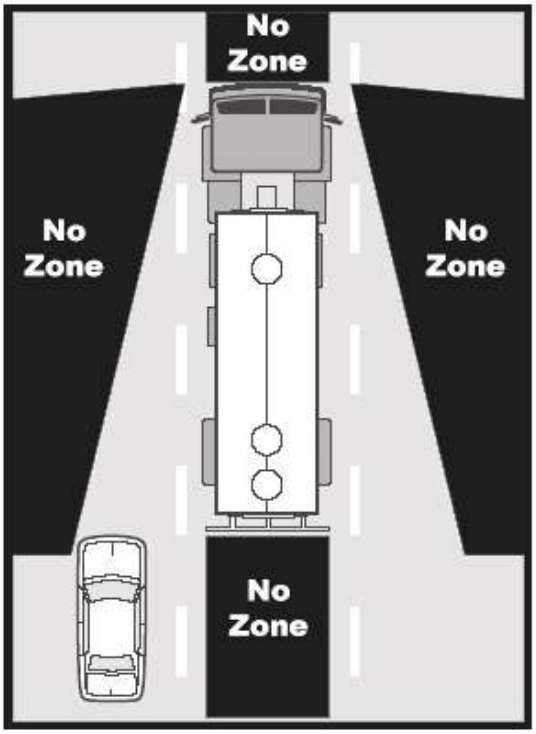
Drive your vehicle where others can see you. Do not drive in another vehicle's blind spot.

- 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 car, get through the other driver's blind spot as quickly as you can. The longer you stay there, the longer you are in danger of them turning into you.
- Never stay alongside 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.

LETTING OTHERS KNOW WHAT YOU ARE DOING

Generally, other drivers expect you to keep doing what you are doing. You must warn them when you are going to change direction or slow down, by vehicle position and eye contact. This will give them time to react, if needed, or at least not to be surprised by what you do.





Use Your Signals to Communicate

You should use your turn signals before you change lanes, turn right or left, merge into traffic, pass on a highway or interstate, or park. It gives other drivers time to react to your moves.

Get into the habit of signaling every time you change direction or lanes. Signal even when you do not see anyone else around. It is easy to miss someone who needs to know what you are doing.

Left Turns - Well ahead of your turn, look for any following vehicles, give signal and move over close to the centerline.

- Signal 100 feet (1/3 city block) or 300 feet (for rural areas) and start slowing down.
- Look and yield right-of-way to oncoming traffic.
- While waiting to complete the turn, keep your wheels pointed straight ahead - if you are struck from behind, you will not be forced into oncoming traffic.
- Enter street just to the right of the center - do not cut corners.
- After completing the turn, gradually move to the center of your lane and be sure that your signal has canceled.

Right Turns - Right turns should be made as close as practical to the right edge of the curb or roadway.

- Well in advance of your turn, get into the proper lane.
- Signal your right turn for 100 feet (1/3 city block) or 300 feet (for rural areas) and slow down.
- Keep as close to the right side as possible when completing a right turn.
- Do not make a wide-sweeping turn or cross into the left lane.

Be careful that you do not signal too early. If there are streets, driveways, or entrances between you and where you want to turn, wait until you have passed them to signal.

If another vehicle is about to enter the street between you and where you plan to turn, wait until you have passed it to signal your turn. If you signal earlier, the other driver may think you plan to turn where they are and they might pull into your path.

After you have made a turn or lane change, make sure your turn signal is off. After small turns, the signals may not turn off by themselves. Turn it off if it has not clicked off by itself. If you don't, other drivers might think you plan to turn again.

Signal When You Slow Down

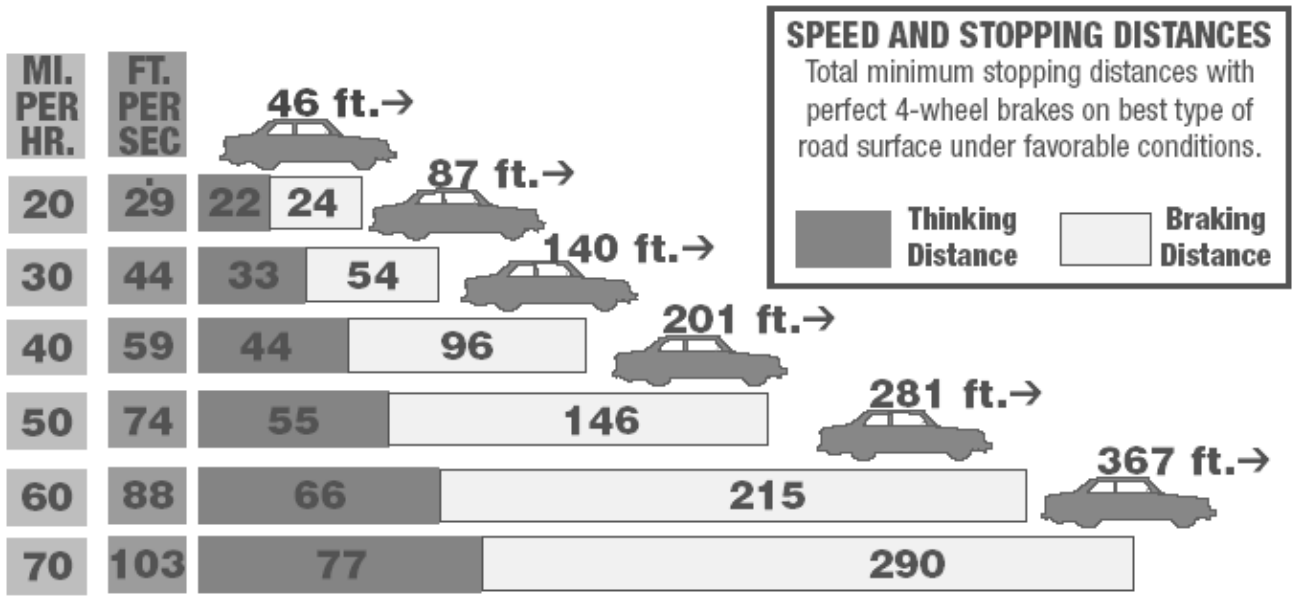
Your brake lights let people know that you are slowing down. Always slow down as early as it is safe to do so. If you are going to stop or slow down at a place where another driver does not expect it, tap your brake pedal three or four times quickly to let those behind you know you are about to slow down.

Signal when you slow down to:

- turn off a roadway that does not have separate turn or exit lanes.
- park or turn just before an intersection (following traffic expects you to continue through the intersection).
- avoid something in the road or stopped or slowing traffic that the driver behind you cannot see.

ADJUSTING SPEED

The faster your vehicle is going, the more distance it will take to turn, slow, or stop. For example, stopping at 60 mph does not take twice the distance as it takes at 30 mph, but over three times the distance. Driving safely means adjusting your speed to road and traffic conditions, how well you can see and obeying speed limits.



ADJUSTING TO ROAD CONDITIONS

There are various road conditions where to be safe you must slow down. You must slow down before a curve, when the roadway is slippery, and when there is standing water on the road.

The only contact your vehicle has with the road is through the tires. How good of a grip the tires have on the road depends on the type and condition of the tires, and the type and condition of the road.

Many drivers do not pay enough attention to the condition of their tires or to the condition of the roadway. It is important that the tires be in good condition and have enough air in them. See the vehicle owner's manual for correct tire pressure.

You do not have as much traction on gravel and dirt roads as you do on concrete and asphalt roads. When driving on gravel or dirt, you must slow down. It will take you much longer to stop and it is much easier to skid when turning.

Curves

A vehicle can travel much faster in a straight line than it can in a curve. It is easy to go too fast in a curve. If you go too fast, the tires will not be able to grip the road, and the vehicle will skid. Always slow down before you enter the curve so you do not have to brake in the curve. Braking in a curve can cause the vehicle to skid.

Slippery Roads

Slow down at the first sign of rain, snow or sleet. These all make the roadway slippery. When the road is slippery, the vehicle's tires do not grip as well as they do on a dry road. How slow should you go? On a wet road you should reduce your speed about 10 mph. On packed snow, you should cut your speed in half. Use snow tires or chains when the road has snow on it. On ice, you must slow to a crawl. It is very dangerous to drive on ice. If you become stranded in a snow storm, the best thing to do is stay in the car as you are more likely to be found.

If at all possible, do not drive when the roads are icy. In some areas where there is a lot of icy weather, special studded tires are allowed. Because these tires can cause road damage, they are not allowed in many areas or on certain roads. Studded tires are not allowed June 1 through September 30.

Some road surfaces are slippery at certain times or places. Here are some clues to help you spot slippery roads:

- On cold, wet days, shady spots can be icy. These areas freeze first and dry out last.
- Overpasses and other types of bridges can have icy spots. The pavement on bridges can be icy even when other pavement is not. This is because bridges do not have earth underneath them to help insulate them against the cold.
- When ice is around the freezing point, it can become wet. This makes it more slippery than at temperatures well below freezing.
- If it starts to rain on a hot day, pavement can be very slippery for the first few minutes. Heat causes oil in the asphalt to come to the surface. It makes the road more slippery until the oil is washed off.

Water on the Roadway

When it is raining or the road is wet, most tires have good traction up to about 35 mph. However, as you go faster, your tires will actually start to float on a film of water. This is called "hydroplaning." In a heavy rain, your tires can lose all traction with the road at about 50 mph. Bald or badly worn tires will lose traction at much lower speeds. The best way to keep from hydroplaning is to slow down in the rain or when the road is wet.

If it feels like your tires have lost traction with the surface of the road, you should:

- Ease your foot off the gas pedal.
- Keep the steering wheel straight. Only try to turn if it's an emergency. If you must turn, do it slowly or you will cause your vehicle to skid.
- Do not try to stop or turn until your tires are gripping the road again.

ADJUSTING TO TRAFFIC

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

Keep Pace With Traffic

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. Drive with the flow of traffic, passing only as needed. The vehicle you are passing may change lanes suddenly; or, on a two-lane road, an oncoming car may appear suddenly. Slow down and keep with other traffic. Speeding does not save more than a few minutes an hour. If you must exceed the speed limit to pass another vehicle, you should not pass until you can do so legally.

Going much slower than other vehicles can be just as bad as speeding. It tends to make vehicles bunch-up behind you and causes the other traffic to pass you. If vehicles are piled-up behind you, pull over and let them pass when it is safe to do so. You should drive faster or consider using a slower road.

Entering Into Traffic

When you merge with traffic, try to enter at the same speed that traffic is moving. Signal your intent to merge, use your rearview mirror AND look over your shoulder. High-speed roadways generally have ramps to give you time to build up your speed. Use the ramp to reach the speed of other vehicles before you pull onto the road. Do not drive to the end of the ramp and stop. This will not leave you enough room to get up to the speed of traffic. Also, drivers behind you will not expect you to stop. If they are watching the traffic on the main road, you may be hit from the rear. If you have to wait for space to enter a roadway, slow down on the ramp so you have some room to speed up before you have to merge. When traveling on a controlled access highway and you observe another driver entering, you should, whenever possible, move to your left so that they may enter safely.

Leaving Traffic

Keep up with the speed of traffic as long as you are on the main road. If the road you are traveling has exit ramps, signal your intent to exit and do not slow down until you move onto the exit ramp. When you turn from a high-speed, two-lane roadway, try not to slow down too early if you have traffic following you. Tap your brakes and reduce your speed quickly, but safely.

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 accident.

- Watch for large trucks and small, underpowered cars on steep grades or when they are entering traffic. They can loose speed on long or steep hills and it takes longer for these vehicles to speed up when they enter traffic.
- Farm tractors, animal-drawn vehicles and roadway maintenance vehicles usually go 25 mph or less. These vehicles must have a slow-moving vehicle sign on the back (shown on page 27).
- Slow moving vehicles must turn off the roadway whenever sufficient area for a safe turnout exists, when four or more vehicles are formed.
- Slow moving vehicles must drive in the extreme right lane of roadway.

Trouble Spots

Wherever people or traffic gathers, your room to maneuver is limited. You need to lower your speed to have time to react in a crowded space. Here are some of the places where you may need to slow down:

- Shopping centers, parking lots, and downtown areas. These are busy areas with vehicles and people stopping and starting and moving in different directions.
- Rush hours. Rush hours often have heavy traffic and drivers that always seem to be in a hurry.
- Narrow bridges and tunnels. Vehicles approaching each other are closer together.
- Toll plazas. Vehicles are changing lanes and preparing to stop and then speeding up again as they leave the plaza. The number of lanes could change both before and after the plaza.
- Schools, playgrounds, and residential streets. These areas often have children present. Always be alert for children crossing the street, running or riding into the street without looking.

ADJUSTING TO HOW WELL YOU CAN SEE

If something is in your path and you need to stop, you need to see it in time to be able to stop. It takes much longer and farther to stop than many people think. If you have good tires and brakes and dry pavement:

- At 50 mph, it can take about 400 feet to react to something you see and bring your vehicle to a stop. That is about the length of a city block.
- At 30 mph, it can take about 200 feet to stop. That is almost half of a city block.

If you cannot see 400 feet ahead, it means you may not be driving safely at 50 mph. If you cannot see 200 feet ahead, you may not be driving safely at 30 mph. By the time you saw an object in your path, it might be too late to stop without hitting it. Nine out of ten traffic accidents are caused by errors in human judgment. The following are some elements that limit how well you can see, and tips to be a safer driver.

Darkness

It is harder to see at night. You must be closer to an object to see it at night than during the day. You must be able to stop within the distance you can see ahead with your headlights. Your headlights will let you see about 400 feet ahead. You should drive at a speed that allows you to stop within this distance, or about 50 mph.

Rain, Fog or Snow

In a very heavy rain, snow storm or thick fog, you may not be able to see much more than 200 feet ahead. When you cannot see any farther than that, you cannot safely drive faster than 30 mph. In a very heavy downpour, you may not be able to see well enough to drive. If this happens, pull off the road in a safe place and wait until it clears.

Hills and Curves

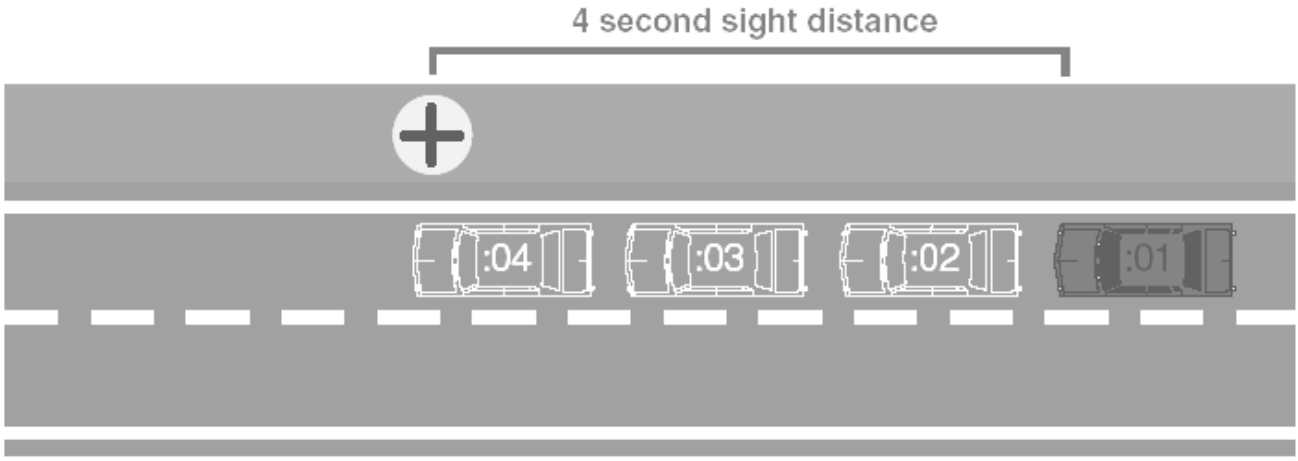
You may not know what is on the other side of a hill or just around a curve, even if you have driven the road hundreds of times. If a car is stalled on the road, just over a hill or around a curve, you must be able to stop. Whenever you come to a hill or curve where you cannot see over or around, adjust your speed so you can stop if necessary.

Parked Cars

Vehicles parked along the side of the road may block your view. People may be ready to get out of a car or walk out from between parked vehicles. Give parked vehicles as much room as you can. Most accidents between cars that are parallel parked and cars being driven on the street are caused by carelessness of the driver pulling away from the curb.

Sight-Distance Rule

Drive at a speed where you can always safely stop. To tell if you are driving too fast for conditions, use the "Four Second Sight Distance Rule." Pick out a stationary object as far ahead as you can clearly see (e.g., a sign or telephone pole). Start counting (e.g., one-one-thousand, two-one-thousand, three-one-thousand, four-one-thousand). If you reach the object before you finish saying “four-one-thousand,” you need to slow down. You are going too fast for your sight distance. You must not drive faster than the distance you can see. If you do, you are not safe and could injure or kill yourself or others.



You can also use the “Four Second Sight Distance Rule” at night to make sure you are not “over driving” your headlights.

Speed Limits

You must comply with speed limits. They are based on the design of the road, the type of vehicles that use them, and where they are located. They take into account things you cannot see, such as side roads and driveways where people may pull out suddenly, and the amount of traffic that uses the road.

Remember, speed limits are posted for ideal conditions. If the road is wet or icy, if you cannot see well, or if traffic is heavy, then you must slow down. Even if you are driving under the posted speed limit, you can get a ticket for traveling too fast under these conditions.

SHARING SPACE

You always must share the road with others. The more distance you keep between yourself and everyone else, the more time you have to react to them. This space is like a safety cushion. The more you have, the safer it can be. This section describes how to make sure you have enough space around you when you drive.

SPACE AHEAD

Rear-end crashes are very common. They are caused by drivers following too closely to stop before hitting the vehicle ahead when that vehicle suddenly stops. There is an easy way to tell if you are following too closely. It is called the “Three-Second Rule,” and it works at any speed.

1. Watch for when the rear of the vehicle ahead passes a sign, pole or any other stationary point. Count the seconds it takes you to reach the same spot.
2. Count (one-one-thousand, two-one-thousand, three-one-thousand).
3. You are following too closely if you pass the mark before you finish counting.
4. If so, drop back and then count again at another spot to check the new following distance. Repeat until you are following no closer than three seconds.

There are situations when you need more space in front of your vehicle. In these situations, you may need a four-second following distance to be safe.

- *On slippery roads* - As you need more distance to stop your vehicle on slippery roads, you must leave more space in front of you. If the vehicle ahead suddenly stops, you will need the extra distance to stop safely.
- *When the driver behind you wants to pass* - Slow down to allow room in front of your vehicle. Slowing also will allow the pass to be completed sooner.
- *When following motorcycles* - If the motorcycle should fall, you need extra distance to avoid the rider. The chances of a fall are greatest on wet or icy roads, gravel roads, or metal surfaces such as bridges, gratings, or streetcar or railroad tracks.
- *When following drivers who cannot see you* - The drivers of trucks, buses, vans, or vehicles pulling campers or trailers may not be able to see you when you are directly behind them. They could stop suddenly without knowing you are behind them. Falling back allows you more room to see ahead.
- *When you have a heavy load or are pulling a trailer* - The extra weight increases your stopping distance.
- *When it is hard for you to see* - When it is hard for you to see ahead because of darkness or bad weather, you need to increase your following distance.
- *When being followed closely* - If you are being followed closely, you should slow down, encouraging the vehicle behind you to pass, or pull off on a turn out and allow them to pass.
- *When following emergency vehicles* - Police vehicles, ambulances and fire trucks need more room to operate.
- *When approaching railroad crossings* - Leave extra room for vehicles required to come to a stop at railroad crossings, including transit buses, school buses, or vehicles carrying hazardous materials.
- *When stopped on a hill* - Leave extra space when stopped on a hill. The vehicle ahead may roll back when it starts up.

SPACE BEHIND

It is not always easy to maintain a safe distance behind your vehicle. However, you can help keep the driver at a safe distance by keeping a steady speed, and signaling in advance when you have to slow down.

Stopping to pick up or let off passengers - Try to find a safe place out of traffic to stop.

Parallel parking - If you want to parallel park and there is traffic coming behind you, then put on your turn signal, pull next to the space, and allow following vehicles to pass before you park.

Driving slowly - When you have to drive so slowly that you slow down other cars, pull to the side of the road when it is safe to do so and let them pass. There are “turnout” areas on some two lane roads you could use. Other two lane roads sometimes have “passing lanes.”

Being tailgated - Every now and then, you may find yourself being followed closely or “tailgated” by another driver. If you are being followed too closely and there is a right lane, move over to the right. If there is no right lane, wait until the way is clear then reduce speed slowly. This will encourage the tailgater to drive around you. Never slow down quickly to discourage a tailgater, all that does is increase your risk of being hit from behind.

SPACE TO THE SIDE

You need space on both sides of your vehicle to have room to turn or change lanes.

Avoid driving next to other vehicles on multi-lane roads. Someone may crowd your lane or try to change lanes and pull into you. Move ahead or drop to the back of the other vehicle.

Keep as much space as you can between yourself and oncoming vehicles. On a two lane road this means not crowding the center line. In general, it is safest to drive in the center of your lane.

Make room for vehicles entering on a roadway that has two or more lanes. If there is no one next to you, move over a lane.

Keep extra space between your vehicle and parked vehicles. Someone could step out from a parked vehicle or from between vehicles, or a parked vehicle could pull out.

Give extra space to pedestrians, especially children. They can move into your path quickly and without warning. Do not share a lane with a pedestrian or bicyclist. Wait until it is safe to pass in the adjoining lane.

"Split the Difference Rule." Split the difference between two hazards. For example, steer a middle course between oncoming and parked vehicles. However, if one is more dangerous than the other, leave a little more space on the danger side. In the example, if the oncoming vehicle is a tractor-trailer, leave a little more room on the side that the truck will pass.

When possible, take potential hazards one at a time. For example, if you are overtaking a bicycle and an oncoming vehicle is approaching, slow down and let the vehicle pass first so that you can give extra room to the bicycle.

Space to Merge

Anytime you want to merge with other traffic, you need a gap of about four seconds. If you move into the middle of a four second gap, both you and the vehicle that is now behind you have a two-second following distance. You need a four-second gap whenever you change lanes, enter a roadway or your lane merges with another travel lane.

Do not try to merge into a gap that is too small. A small gap can quickly become even smaller. Enter a gap that gives you a big enough space cushion to be safe.

If you want to cross several lanes, take them one at a time. Like going up or down stairs one step at a time, it is safest and easiest to merge one lane at a time. It is very difficult to determine that all the lanes are free and safe to cross. If you were to wait until all the lanes were clear, you could tie up traffic and even cause a crash.

Space to Cross or Enter

When you cross traffic, you need a large enough gap to get all the way across the road. When you enter traffic, you need enough space to first turn and then get up to speed.

When you cross traffic, you need room to get all the way across. Stopping halfway across is only safe when there is a median divider large enough to hold your car. Do not stop in a divider where part of your vehicle is sticking into traffic.

If you are turning left, make sure there are no vehicles or pedestrians blocking your path. You do not want to be caught waiting for a path to clear while being stuck across a lane that has an oncoming vehicle bearing down on you.

Even if you have a green light, do not start across the intersection if there are cars blocking your way. If you are caught in the intersection when the light changes to red, you will block other traffic. You can get a ticket for blocking an intersection.

Never assume another driver will share space with you or give you space. Do not turn just because an approaching vehicle has a turn signal on. The driver may plan to turn beyond you, or have forgotten to turn the signal off from a prior turn. This is particularly true of motorcycles; their signals often do not cancel by themselves. Wait until the other driver actually starts to turn and then go if it is safe to do so.

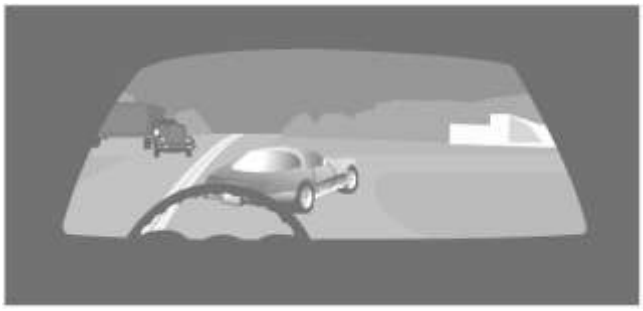
SPACING

Whenever signs or road markings permit you to pass, you will have to judge whether you have enough room to pass safely. Do not count on having enough time to pass several cars at once. Be safe. As a general rule, only pass one vehicle at a time. At a speed of 55 mph, you need about 10 seconds to pass. That means you need a 10 second gap in oncoming traffic and sight distance to pass. You must judge whether you have enough space to pass safely.

At 55 mph you will travel over 800 feet in 10 seconds. So will an oncoming vehicle. That means you need over 1600 feet or about one-third of a mile to pass safely. It is hard to judge the speed of oncoming vehicles at this distance. They do not seem to be coming as fast as they really are. A vehicle that is far enough away generally appears to be standing still. In fact, if you can really see it coming closer, it may be too close for you to pass. If you are not sure, wait to pass until you are sure that there is enough space.

Hills and curves - You have to be able to see at least one-third of a mile or about 10 seconds ahead. Anytime your view is blocked by a curve or a hill, you should assume that there is an oncoming vehicle just out of your sight. Therefore, you should treat a curve or a hill as you do an oncoming vehicle. This means you should not start to pass if you are within one-third of a mile of a hill or a curve.

Intersections - It is dangerous to pass where a vehicle is likely to enter or cross the road. Such places include intersections, railroad crossings, and shopping center entrances. While you are passing, the vehicle you are passing can block your view of people, vehicles or trains. Also, drivers turning right into the approaching lane will not expect to find you approaching in their lane. They may not even look your way before turning.



Lane restrictions - Before you pass, look ahead for road conditions and traffic that may cause other vehicles to move into your lane. You might lose your space for passing because of:

- People or bicyclists near the road.
- A narrow bridge or other situation that causes reduced lane width.
- A patch of ice, pothole, or something on the road.

Space to return - Do not pass unless you have enough space to return to the driving lane. And do not count upon other drivers to make room for you.

Before you return to the driving lane, be sure to leave enough room between yourself and the vehicle you have passed. When you can see both headlights of the vehicle you just passed in your rearview mirror, it is safe to return to the driving lane.

SPACE FOR SPECIAL SITUATIONS

There are certain drivers and other road users you should give extra room to. Here are some of them.

Those who cannot see you

Anyone who cannot see you may enter your path without knowing you are there. Those who could have trouble seeing you include:

- Drivers at intersections, or driveways, whose view is blocked by buildings, trees or other cars.
- Drivers backing into the roadway, or backing into or pulling out of parking spaces.
- Drivers whose windows are covered with snow or ice or are steamed-up.
- Pedestrians with umbrellas in front of their faces or hats pulled down.

People who are distracted

Even when others can see you, allow extra room or be extra cautious if you think they may be distracted. People who may be distracted include: delivery persons, construction workers, children, and drivers who are not paying attention to their driving, e.g., talking or texting on their cell phone, eating, putting on makeup, playing music too loudly, etc.

People who may be confused

People who are confused may cause an unsafe situation. People who may be confused include:

- Tourists, or others, who do not seem to know where they are going.
- Drivers who slow down for what seems like no reason.
- Drivers looking for street signs or house numbers.

Drivers in trouble

If another driver makes a mistake, do not make it worse; for example, drivers who pass you when they do not have enough room. Slow down and let them return to the drive lane safely. If another driver needs to suddenly change lanes, slow down and let them merge. These gestures will keep traffic moving smoothly and safely.

MINI - QUIZ

At dusk or on overcast days, you should:

- ☐ Drive with your four way flashers on.
- ☐ Drive with your parking lights on.
- ☐ Not turn any vehicle lights on.
- ☐ Turn on your vehicle lights.

You should be cautious when passing a bicycle because:

- ☐ You are going faster than the bicycle.
- ☐ The bicycle always has the right-of-way.
- ☐ Oncoming traffic may not see you pull out to pass.
- ☐ The cyclist may have to swerve into traffic to avoid an object on the road.

In order to avoid last-minute braking, or the need to turn, you should look down the road at least:

- ☐ 2 seconds ahead of your vehicle.
- ☐ 4 seconds ahead of your vehicle.
- ☐ 10 seconds ahead of your vehicle.
- ☐ 15 seconds ahead of your vehicle.

Driving at night requires increased caution because:

- ☐ Traffic is faster at night.
- ☐ There is a larger volume of traffic at night.
- ☐ A driver cannot see as well at night.
- ☐ Accidents occur more frequently at night.

Other than by your turn signals, other motorists can sometimes determine your intention to turn by:

- ☐ Your vehicle positions and eye contact.
- ☐ The turning of your wheels.
- ☐ You slowing up at the corner.
- ☐ The actions of the car behind you.

A good rule to remember for passing is:

- ☐ Pass on the right whenever possible.
- ☐ Drive with the flow of traffic, passing only as needed.
- ☐ Try to get to the front of any line of slow moving traffic so that you can see better.
- ☐ Always flash your lights and sound your horn to alert the other driver.

“Hydroplaning” is best described as:

- ☐ Your tires pushing water out of their paths.
- ☐ Your tires actually floating on a film of water.
- ☐ Your tires causing sheets of water to splash on passing vehicles.
- ☐ Your tires throwing water to the rear, causing problems for following vehicles.

If you become stranded in a snow storm, the best thing to do is:

- ☐ Get out of the car and go for help.
- ☐ Lay down in the car and go to sleep.
- ☐ Keep the windows rolled up tight, keeping the engine running at all times.
- ☐ Stay in the car, as you are more likely to be found.

SECTION 7 - BE IN SHAPE TO DRIVE

Driving safely is not always easy. In fact, it is one of the most complex things that people do. It also is one of the few things we do regularly that can injure and kill us. It is worth the effort to be a careful driver.

To be a safe driver, it takes a lot of skill and judgment. This task is even more difficult when you are just learning to drive. Driving can easily take all the ability you have. If anything happens so you are not up to your ability, you may not be a safe driver. Your ability to be a safe driver depends on being able to see clearly, not being overly tired, not driving while on drugs, being generally healthy, and being emotionally fit to drive; in other words, it means being in “shape” to drive safely.

VISION AND HEARING

VISION

Good vision is a must for safe driving. You drive based on what you see. If you cannot see clearly, you will have trouble identifying traffic and road conditions, spotting potential trouble, and reacting in a timely manner.

Vision is so important that Montana requires that you pass a vision test before you get a driver license. This test measures that you have at least 20/40 vision in at least one eye, with or without corrective lenses.

Because it is so important for safe driving to see well, you should have your eyes checked every year or two by an eye specialist. You may never know you have poor vision unless your eyes are tested.

If you need to wear glasses or contact lenses for driving, remember to:

- Always wear them when you drive, even if it is only to run down to the corner. If your driver license says you must wear corrective lenses and you are not and you happen to be stopped, you could get a ticket.
- Try to keep an extra pair of glasses in your vehicle. Then if your regular glasses were to break or be lost, you can drive safely. This also can be helpful if you do not wear glasses all the time. It is easy to misplace them.
- Avoid using dark glasses or tinted contact lenses at night, even if it helps with glare. The problem is that they cut too much light - light that you need in order to see clearly.

Other important aspects of vision are:

Side Vision

You need to see “out the corner of your eye.” This lets you spot vehicles and other potential trouble on either side of you while you look ahead. Because you cannot focus on things to the side, you also must use your side mirrors and glance to the side if necessary.

Judging Distances and Speeds

Even if you can see clearly, you still may not be able to judge distances or speeds very well. In fact, you are not alone; many people have problems judging distances and speeds. It takes a lot of practice to be able to judge both. It is especially important in knowing how far you are from other vehicles and judging safe gaps when merging, and when passing on two lane roads.

Night Vision

Many people who can see clearly in the daytime have trouble seeing at night. All people have more trouble seeing at night than in the daytime. Some drivers have problems with glare while driving at night, especially with the glare of oncoming headlights. If you have problems seeing at night, don’t drive more than is necessary, and when you do, be very careful.

HEARING

Hearing can be helpful to safe driving. The sound of horns, a siren, or screeching tires can warn you of danger. Hearing problems, like bad eyesight, can come on so slowly that you do not notice it. Drivers who know they are deaf or have hearing problems can adjust and be safe drivers. They learn to rely more on their vision and stay alert. Studies have shown that the driving records of hearing impaired drivers are just as good as those drivers with good hearing.

FATIGUE

When you are tired, you cannot drive as safely as when you are rested. You do not see as well nor are you as alert as when you are rested. It takes you more time to make decisions and you do not always make good decisions. You can be more irritable and can get upset more easily. Lastly, when you are tired you could fall asleep behind the wheel and crash. The following are tips to help prevent you from getting tired on a long trip.

- Try to get a normal night's sleep before you leave.
- Do not leave on a trip if you are already tired. Plan your trips so you can leave when you are rested.
- Eat lightly. Do not eat a large meal before you leave. Some people get sleepy after they eat a big meal.
- Take breaks. Stop every two hours or so, or when you need to. Walk around, get some fresh air, and have some coffee, soda, or juice. The few minutes spent on a rest break can save your life.
- Plan for plenty of time to complete your trip safely.
- Try not to drive late at night when you are normally asleep. Your body thinks it is time to go to sleep and will try to do so.
- Never drive if you are sleepy. It is better to stop and sleep for a few hours than to take a chance you can stay awake. If possible, switch off with another driver and you can sleep while they drive.

DRINKING AND DRIVING

Alcohol is involved in about 40% of the traffic accidents in which somebody is killed. If you drink alcohol, even a little, your chances of being in an accident are much greater than if you did not drink any alcohol.

No one can drink alcohol and drive safely, even if you have been driving for many years. New drivers are more affected by alcohol than experienced drivers, because new drivers are still learning to drive.

Because drinking alcohol and then driving is dangerous, the penalties are very tough. People who drive after drinking risk getting heavy fines, higher insurance rates, loss of license, and even jail sentences.

WHY IS DRINKING AND DRIVING SO DANGEROUS?

Alcohol reduces all of the important skills you need to drive safely. After you drink alcohol, it goes from your stomach into your blood and to all parts of your body. It reaches your brain in 20 to 40 minutes. In your brain, alcohol affects those areas of your brain that control judgment and skill. This is one reason why drinking alcohol is so dangerous - it affects your judgment. Good judgment is important to driving. But in this case, judgment helps you to know when to stop drinking. In a way, it's like alcohol puts good judgment on hold. You do not know when you have had too much to drink until it is too late. It is a little like a sunburn: by the time you feel it, it is already too late.

Alcohol slows your reflexes and reaction time, reduces your ability to see clearly, and makes you less alert. As the amount of alcohol in your body increases, your judgment worsens and your skill decreases. You will have trouble judging distances, speeds and the movement of other vehicles. Finally, you will have trouble controlling your vehicle.

IF YOU DRINK, WHEN CAN YOU DRIVE?

The best answer is:
If you drink alcohol, do not drive. Even one alcoholic beverage can affect your driving.

Many factors play a part in determining how impaired a person will become when consuming alcohol: the amount consumed; how fast it is consumed; a person's body weight; food intake; and, a person's general health. **Alcohol may still accumulate in your body even if you are drinking at a rate of one drink per hour.**

One alcoholic drink is: 1-1/2 ounces of 80-proof liquor (one shot glass), straight or with a mixer; 12 ounces of beer (a regular size can, bottle, mug or glass); or a 5 ounce glass of wine. Specialty drinks can have more alcohol in them and are the same as having several normal drinks.

There are ways of dealing with social drinking situations. Arrange to go with two or more persons, where one of you will not drink alcohol. You can rotate among the group being a "designated driver." If available, you might take public transportation or a cab.

ALCOHOL AND THE LAW

You are not allowed to buy or consume alcohol unless you are 21 years of age or older.

If you are arrested for drinking and driving, the penalties are severe. You can be arrested for driving with a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) of 0.08% or more, or while driving under the influence. BAC is the percentage of alcohol in your blood, and is usually determined by a breath, blood, or urine test.

If a police officer asks you to take a test, you must do so. You can lose your driver license if you refuse to take a BAC test. If you are found guilty of an alcohol violation and it is your first conviction, you will be fined from $300 to $1000, plus court charges; you could be sentenced to 1 to 60 days in jail; and your license will be suspended for six months.

For second and subsequent convictions, the penalties are much worse.

Open Containers

Montana law also prohibits the possession of an open alcoholic beverage container by a person in a motor vehicle.

Open alcoholic beverage containers, including bottles, cans, jars or other receptacles containing any amount of an alcoholic beverage must be kept:

- In a locked glove compartment or storage compartment;
- In a trunk, luggage compartment, truck bed or cargo compartment; or
- Behind the last upright seat or within a closed container kept in an area not normally occupied by the driver or passenger of any motor vehicle that is not equipped with a trunk.

There are exceptions within the law for:

- Containers with an unbroken seal and none of the original contents removed;
- Open containers stored within the living quarters of a camper, travel trailer or motor home; and
- Passengers transported by a hired driver within a bus, taxi, or limousine.

But remember, it is an offense to unlawfully possess an open alcoholic beverage container within the passenger area of a motor vehicle on a highway.

REPORT A DRUNK DRIVER

In December 1981, the Governor, the Attorney General, and officials from the Montana Highway Traffic Safety Division, the Alcohol and Drug Abuse Division and the Montana Highway Patrol inaugurated the “Report A Drunk Driver” program. Nationally over 23,000 deaths occur yearly as a direct result of a drinking or drunk driver. In Montana, 50% of all traffic fatalities are alcohol related, and over 2100 injuries are the result of a drinking or drunk driver. The problem is immense and the “Report A Drunk Driver” program is designated to help rid the road and highways of your NUMBER ONE killer.

The program is very simple. All it requires is everyone’s concern and a phone call. All citizens who suspect a person of driving while intoxicated are asked to call their local law enforcement agency or the Montana Highway Patrol and give a description of the vehicle and the direction in which the suspected vehicle is traveling. You do not have to give your name. Law enforcement personnel will attempt to make contact with the suspect vehicle, and if probable cause can be determined a stop and possible arrest will be made.

The program works. Current statistics show that law enforcement officials are able to make contact with 37% of those suspected of driving under the influence, and of those contacted, 71% are being arrested for drunk driving. Two drinking drivers are being arrested each day in Montana as a direct result of this program. If you see someone you suspect of driving while intoxicated, or need to report an accident, you may call toll free 1-800-525-5555.

REPORT A DRUNK DRIVER
1-800-525-5555

OTHER DRUGS AND DRIVING

Besides alcohol, there are many other drugs that can affect a person’s ability to drive safely. These drugs can have effects like those of alcohol, or even worse. This is true of many prescription drugs or even many of the drugs you can buy without a prescription. Drugs taken for headaches, colds, hay fever or other allergies, or to calm nerves can make a person drowsy and affect their driving. Pep pills, “uppers,” and diet pills can make a driver feel more alert for a short time. Later, however, they can cause a person to be nervous, dizzy, not able to concentrate, and they can affect your vision. Other prescription drugs can affect your reflexes, judgment, vision, and alertness in ways similar to alcohol.

If you are driving, check the label before you take a drug for warnings about its effects. If you are not sure if it is safe to take the drug and drive, ask your doctor or pharmacist about any side effects. Never drink alcohol while you are taking other drugs. The drugs could multiply the effects of alcohol or have additional side effects of their own. These effects not only reduce your ability to be a safe driver, but the effects could cause serious health problems, even death.

Illegal drugs are not good for your health and affect your ability to be a safe driver. For example, studies have shown that people who use marijuana make more mistakes, have more trouble adjusting to glare, and get arrested for traffic violations more than other drivers.

HEALTH

Many health problems can affect your driving - a bad cold, infection, or a virus. Even little problems like a stiff neck, a cough, or a sore leg can affect your driving. If you are not feeling well and need to go somewhere, let someone else drive. You should decide each time you drive if you are physically able or mentally capable to drive safely.

Some health conditions can be very dangerous:

EPILEPSY

A person suffering from a condition needs a physician to attest in writing that the person's condition has stabilized and would not be likely to interfere with that person's ability to operate a motor vehicle safely.

DIABETES

Diabetics who take insulin should not drive when there is any chance of going into shock. Such a situation could result from skipping a meal or snack, or from taking the wrong amount of insulin. It also might be a good idea to have someone else drive during times when your doctor is adjusting your insulin dosage. If you have diabetes, you also should have your eyes checked regularly for possible night blindness and other vision problems.

HEART CONDITION

People with heart diseases, high blood pressure, or circulation problems may be in danger of a blackout, fainting, or a heart attack; and, if the condition is untreated, should not drive a motor vehicle. If a doctor is treating you for a heart condition, ask if the condition could affect your driving safely.

EMOTIONS

Stress can lessen your concentration on the driving task and emotions can have a great effect on your driving safely. You may not be able to drive well if you are overly worried, excited, afraid, angry, or just down.

If you are angry or excited, give yourself time to cool off. If necessary, take a short walk, but stay off the road until you have calmed down. If you are worried or down about something, try to keep your mind on your driving. Some find listening to the radio helps. If you are impatient, give yourself extra time for your driving trip. Leave a few minutes early. If you have plenty of time, you may not tend to speed or do other things that can get you a traffic ticket or cause an accident.

MINI - QUIZ

Your body gets rid of:

- ☐ Three (alcoholic) drinks an hour
- ☐ One (alcoholic) drink an hour
- ☐ Two (alcoholic) drinks an hour
- ☐ None of the above

To help relieve fatigue on a trip, it would be a good idea to:

- ☐ Stop for a rest every two hours
- ☐ Do arm exercises every hour
- ☐ Drive with one eye open at a time
- ☐ Change feet on the gas pedal

The main reason why drinking alcohol and then driving is so dangerous is that it affects your:

- ☐ Coordination
- ☐ Vision
- ☐ Judgment and skill
- ☐ Reflexes

Stress can affect your driving by:

- ☐ Lessening your concentration on the driving task
- ☐ Decreasing your chances of an accident
- ☐ Causing you to go to sleep at the wheel
- ☐ Making you more aware of others around you

What is the number one killer on Montana's roads?

- ☐ Poor or unkempt roads
- ☐ Inclement weather/driving conditions
- ☐ Drunk drivers
- ☐ Excessive speed

SECTION 8 - EMERGENCIES

All drivers sooner or later will find themselves in an emergency situation. As careful as you are, there are situations that could cause you a problem. If you are prepared, you may be able to prevent any serious outcomes.

VEHICLE EMERGENCIES

There is always a chance of a vehicle problem while driving. You should follow the recommended maintenance schedule listed in the vehicle owner's manual. Following these preventative measures greatly reduces the chance your vehicle will have a problem. Following are some possible vehicle failures and what you can do if they happen.

If your vehicle's right wheels leave the pavement, take your foot off the accelerator and when slowed down, ease back on the road when safe.

BRAKE FAILURE

If your brakes stop working:

- Pump the brake pedal several times. This will often build up enough brake pressure to allow you to stop.
- If that doesn't work, use the parking brake. Pull on the parking brake handle slowly so you will not lock the rear wheels and cause a skid. Be ready to release the brake if the vehicle does start to skid.
- If that doesn't work, start shifting to lower gears and look for a safe place to slow to a stop. Make sure the car is off the roadway. Do not drive the vehicle without brakes.

TIRE BLOWOUT

If a tire suddenly goes flat:

- Hold the steering wheel tightly and keep the vehicle going straight.
- Slow down gradually. Take your foot off the gas pedal and use the brakes lightly.
- Do not stop on the road if at all possible. Pull off the road in a safe place.

POWER FAILURE

If the engine dies while you are driving:

- Keep a strong grip on the steering wheel. Be aware that the steering may be difficult to turn, but you can turn it.
- Pull off the roadway. The brakes will still work, but you may have to push very hard on the brake pedal.

HEADLIGHT FAILURE

If your headlights suddenly go out:

- Try the headlight switch a few times.
- If that does not work, put on the emergency flashers, turn signals, or fog lights, if you have them.
- Pull off the road as soon as possible.

GAS PEDAL STICKS

If the motor keeps going faster and faster:

- Keep your eyes on the road.
- Quickly shift to neutral.
- Apply steady pressure on the brake.
- Pull off the road when it is safe to do so.
- Turn off the engine.

AVOIDING COLLISIONS

When it looks like a collision may happen, many drivers panic and fail to act. In some cases they do act, but do something that does not help reduce the chance of the collision. There almost always is something you can do to avoid the crash, or reduce the results of the crash. In avoiding a collision, drivers have three options: (1) stop, (2) turn, and (3) speed up.

STOPPING QUICKLY

Most new vehicles have ABS (Anti-lock Braking System). Be sure to read the vehicle owner's manual on how to use the ABS. The ABS system will allow you to stop without skidding. In general, if you need to stop quickly:

With ABS: If you have an anti-lock braking system and you need to stop quickly:

- Press on the brake pedal as hard as you can and keep pressing on it.
- You might feel the brake pedal pushing back when the ABS is working. Do not let up on the brake pedal. The ABS system will only work with the brake pedal pushed down.

Without ABS: If you must stop quickly and you do not have an anti-lock braking system:

- You can cause the vehicle to go into a skid if you brake too hard.
- Apply the brakes as hard as you can without locking them.
- If the brakes lock up, you will feel the vehicle start to skid. Quickly let up on the brake pedal.
- As soon as the vehicle stops skidding, push down on the brake pedal again. Keep doing this until the vehicle has stopped.

TURNING QUICKLY

In most cases, you can turn the vehicle quicker than you can stop it. You should consider turning in order to avoid a collision.

Make sure you have a good grip with both hands on the steering wheel. It is best to have your hands at about 9 o'clock and 3 o'clock positions (8 o'clock and 4 o'clock in newer vehicles equipped with airbags on the steering wheel). Once you have turned away or changed lanes, you must be ready to keep the vehicle under control. Some drivers steer away from one collision only to end up in another. Always steer in the direction you want the vehicle to go.

With ABS - One aspect of having ABS is that you can turn your vehicle while braking without skidding. This is very helpful if you must turn or stop or slow down.

Without ABS - If you do not have ABS, you must use a different procedure to turn quickly. You also step on the brake pedal, but then you let up and turn the steering wheel. Braking will slow the vehicle some, and it puts more weight on the front tires and this allows for a quicker turn. Do not lock up the front wheels while braking or turn so sharply that the vehicle can only plow ahead.

Another consideration is that generally it is better to run off the road than to crash head-on into another vehicle.

SPEEDING UP

Sometimes it is best or necessary to speed up to avoid a collision. This may happen when another vehicle is about to hit you from the side or from behind and there is room to the front of you to get out of danger. Be sure to slow down once the danger has passed.

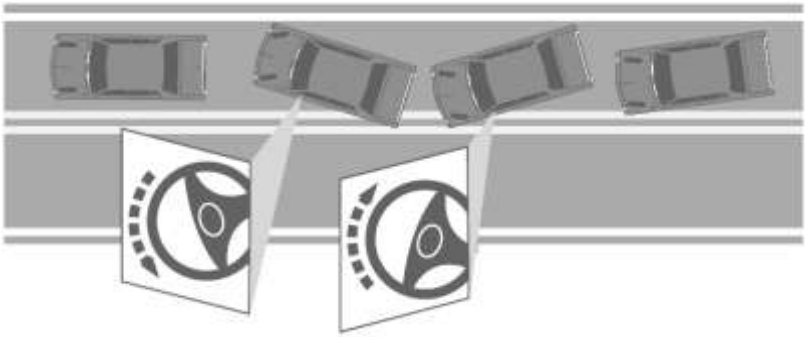
DEALING WITH SKIDS

Any road that is safe under normal conditions can be dangerous when it is wet, or has snow or ice on it. High speeds under normal conditions also increase the possibility of a skid if you must turn or stop suddenly. Skids are caused when the tires can no longer grip the road.

As you cannot control a vehicle when it is skidding, it is best not to cause your vehicle to skid in the first place. In the vast majority of cases drivers traveling too fast for conditions caused skids.

If your vehicle begins to skid:

- Stay off the brake - Until the vehicle slows, your brakes will not work and could cause you to skid more.
- Steer - Turn the steering wheel in the direction you want the vehicle to go. As soon as the vehicle begins to straighten out, turn the steering wheel back the other way. If you do not do so, your vehicle may swing around in the other direction and you could start a new skid.
- Continue to steer - Continue to correct your steering, left and right, until the vehicle is again moving down the road under your control.



PROTECT YOURSELF IN COLLISIONS

You may not always be able to avoid a collision. Try everything you can to keep from getting hit. If nothing works, try to lessen any injuries that could result from the crash. The most important thing you can do is to use your lap and shoulder belts. Other than your safety belts, there are a couple of other things that could help you prevent more serious injuries.

HIT FROM THE REAR

If your vehicle is hit from the rear, your body will be thrown back toward the rear of your vehicle. Press yourself against the back of your seat and put your head against the head restraint. Be ready to apply your brakes so that you will not be pushed into another vehicle. Your lap and shoulder belts will help minimize your vulnerability to injury.

HIT FROM THE SIDE

If your vehicle is hit from the side, your body will be thrown toward the side that is hit. Side air bags will help in this situation, but you still need your lap and shoulder belts to help minimize your vulnerability to injury. Your lap and shoulder belts are needed to help keep you behind the wheel. Get ready to steer or brake to prevent your vehicle from hitting something else.

HIT FROM THE FRONT

If your vehicle is hit from the front it is important to try to have a “glancing blow” rather than being struck head on. This means if a collision is going to happen, try to turn the vehicle. At worse, you hit with a “glancing blow.” You might miss it. If your vehicle has an air bag, it will inflate. It also will deflate following the crash, so be ready to prevent your vehicle from hitting something else. Your lap and shoulder belts will help minimize your vulnerability to injury.

ACCIDENTS

Do not stop at an accident unless you are involved or emergency help has not yet arrived. Keep your attention on your driving and keep moving, watching for people who might be in or near the road. Never drive to the scene of an accident, fire, or other disaster just to look. You may block the way for police, firefighters, ambulances, tow trucks, and/or other rescue vehicles.

No matter how good a driver you are, there may be a time when you are involved in a crash. If you are involved in an accident you must stop. If you are involved in an accident with a parked vehicle, you must try to locate the owner. If any person is injured or killed, the police must be notified. It is a crime for you to leave a crash site where your vehicle was involved if there is an injury or death before police have talked to you and gotten all the information they need about the crash.

You may want to carry a basic emergency kit that has flares and first aid supplies in your vehicle.

AT THE ACCIDENT SCENE

- Stop your vehicle at or near the accident site. If your vehicle can move, get it off the road so that it does not block traffic.
- Do not stand or walk in traffic lanes. You could be struck by another vehicle.
- Turn off the ignition of wrecked vehicles. Do not smoke around wrecked vehicles. Fuel could have spilled and fire is a real danger.
- If there are electrical wires down, do not go near them.
- Make sure that other traffic will not be involved in the crash. Use flares or other warning devices to alert traffic of the accident.

IF SOMEONE IS INJURED

- Get help. Make sure the police and emergency medical or rescue squad have been called. If there is a fire, tell the police when they are called.
- Do not move the injured, unless they are in a burning car or in other immediate danger. Moving a person can make their injuries worse.
- First, help anyone who is not already walking and talking. Check for breathing, then check for bleeding.
- If there is bleeding, apply direct pressure directly on the wound with your hand or with a cloth. Even severe bleeding can almost always be stopped or slowed by using pressure on the wound.
- Do not give injured persons anything to drink, not even water.
- To help prevent an injured person from going into shock, cover them with a blanket or coat to keep them warm.

REPORT THE ACCIDENT

- Get the names and addresses of all people involved in the accident and any witnesses. Also, make sure to get the names and addresses of any injured persons.
- Exchange information with other drivers involved in the crash. Name, address, driver license number, vehicle information (license plate, make, model and year of vehicle), and insurance company and policy number if available.
- Record any damage to the vehicles involved in the crash.
- Provide information to the police or other emergency officials if requested.
- Should the accident involve a parked car, try to find the owner. If you cannot, leave a note in a place where it can be seen with information on how the owner can reach you and the date and time of the accident.

- You must report an accident immediately to law enforcement if anyone is injured or killed, or property damage is $500 or more. You must report to the Highway Patrol if there is an injury, a death, or property damage of $1000 or more to one person's property. Accident forms are at law enforcement agencies or available from most insurance agents. You must file the report within 10 days of the accident. If you are injured and unable to complete the report, someone may file it for you.

MOTOR VEHICLE INSURANCE

Liability insurance is mandatory (except for motorcycles). Owners shall continuously provide insurance of not less than:

- $25,000 - Bodily Injury or Death of one person in any one accident.
- $50,000 - Bodily Injury or Death of two persons in any one accident.
- $10,000 - Injury to or destruction of property of others in any one accident.

This insurance must be in effect in the vehicle being operated. You must carry your insurance card, issued by an insurance company, and exhibit it upon demand by a law enforcement officer.

Operating a motor vehicle upon the roadways of Montana WITHOUT a valid policy of liability insurance is a misdemeanor punishable by a fine not less than $250, not to exceed $500, or by imprisonment in the county jail for not more than 10 days or both; 5 points against your driving record. A second or subsequent offense is punishable by a fine of not less than $350, or by imprisonment in the county jail for not more than 10 days or both; suspension of your license plates and registration for 90 days (180 days for 3rd or subsequent offense).

Should you be involved in an accident, your license and registration can be suspended if you are found liable for the damages in a court of law and you fail to satisfy (pay) the judgment within 60 days. Remember, suspension is automatic. It remains in force until the judgment has been paid or six years have elapsed. Additionally, you will be required to submit proof of motor vehicle insurance.

The law also provides that owners of more than 25 motor vehicles registered in the State of Montana may qualify as self-insurers. In the case of nonresident owners or operators who are involved in any accident in Montana, adequate insurance written by a company licensed to do business in this state will be accepted. Non-residents owning or operating motor vehicles in Montana are subject to all of the provisions and penalties of the Safety Responsibility Law and if they do not comply, their driving privileges in the State of Montana will be withdrawn. A certified copy of the record will be sent to a non-resident's home state if it has a law authorizing authorities to act on it.

MINI - QUIZ

What should you do if your car's right wheels leave the pavement?

- ☐ Stop quickly
- ☐ Pull all the way off and wait until it is safe to get back on the road
- ☐ Accelerate and steer back on the road quickly
- ☐ Take your foot off the gas and when you are slowed down, ease back on the road when it is safe to do so

What should you do if your accelerator sticks while driving?

- ☐ Reach down and attempt to pull it up
- ☐ Shift to park
- ☐ Shift to neutral and apply steady pressure on the brake
- ☐ Turn the engine off

When involved in an accident as a driver:

- ☐ Do not exchange information with other drivers
- ☐ Exchange all information with other drivers
- ☐ Deny responsibility for the accident
- ☐ Let the other driver report the accident

When approaching an accident scene, you should:

- ☐ Keep your attention on your driving
- ☐ Keep moving
- ☐ Stop if you are involved or if emergency help has not arrived
- ☐ All of the above

If involved in an accident, a driver should:

- ☐ Stop their vehicle at or near the scene
- ☐ Do not stand or walk in traffic lanes
- ☐ Turn off the ignition of wrecked vehicle(s)
- ☐ All of the above

SECTION 9 – TITLE AND REGISTRATION

As a motor vehicle owner or driver, you may have questions. In the following you will find information to help you understand motor vehicle regulations in Montana.

REGISTRATION OF MOTOR VEHICLES

- All motor vehicles and all trailers must be registered.
- Application is made at the County Treasurer of residence.
- The previous year's registration receipt or your renewal card notice MUST be presented when registering motor vehicles.
- A non-resident makes registration application when residence is established or becomes gainfully employed.
- A copy of the registration certificate MUST be kept when registering motor vehicles.
- The registration is your receipt and record of property tax or vehicle license fee paid to the county.

LICENSE PLATES

- Issued by the County Treasurer where your vehicle is subject to tax or fee.
- Issued for one year, 24 months, or permanent depending on year of vehicle.
- Anniversary months are assigned according to month in which vehicle is first registered and is identified by the decal on the license plate.
- Vehicles on non-staggered system - trucks exceeding 10,000 lbs. GVW (exceed 1 ton effective 01/01/96), amateur radio, disabled veterans, trailers, semi trailers, tractors, buses, motorcycles, boats, off-highway vehicles and special mobile equipment. Expiration date December 31 and must be renewed by February 15. Motor homes and travel trailers expire annually on April 30, and must be renewed by June 15. Snowmobiles expire June 30 annually, and must be renewed by August 15.
- Vehicles on non-staggered system - passenger cars, and light trucks (1 ton and under, effective 01/01/96), except amateur radio and disabled veterans. Renew by the last day of the anniversary month.
- Plates stay with the owners; it is their responsibility to remove them.
- Plates may be transferred to another vehicle ONLY when proper application is made through the County Treasurer.
- A vehicle may be operated without plates for a 40-day grace period, before registration, by displaying a 40-day permit issued by a dealer, if purchased from a dealer, or a vehicle purchase permit issued by the County Treasurer and participating law enforcement agencies if purchased from an individual.
- Renewal Notice is mailed for vehicles on the staggered system. FAILURE TO RECEIVE NOTICE does NOT relieve the owner of renewal responsibility.

CAMPERS

- No registration required, only titling required due to law change January 2004.

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT YOUR TITLE

- All motor vehicles, trailers and snowmobiles are issued Titles - application is made at the County Treasurer's Office of the applicant's residence. Motorboats and sailboats 12 feet in length or longer are titled. All-terrain vehicles are titled. New pickup campers must be titled also.
- Any erasures or deletions will void the title; see your County Treasurer to correct any errors.
- The Title and Registration Bureau in Deer Lodge, Montana, produces the Certificate of Title and keeps motor vehicle records.

WHEN BUYING A VEHICLE

- Obtain the Title and Registration receipt from the seller.
- Title must be signed by all registered owners and signatures notarized.
- The seller, on the title or in separate statement required for all motor vehicles 9 years old or newer, must record the odometer reading.
- Be very sure liens have been paid and released.
- Always compare the Vehicle Identification Number (VIN), which appears on the Title with the number stamped or affixed to the vehicle. If the two numbers do not agree, do not complete the purchase until legal ownership is verified.
- Application for new Title and Registration must be made to the County Treasurer of residence within 40 days (failure to make application within the 40-day grace period subjects the transferee to a penalty).

WHEN PURCHASING FROM A CAR DEALER

- The dealer will send all documents to the County Treasurer within 30 calendar days from the date of delivery.

REGISTRATION AND LICENSE PLATE FEES

(MCA 61-3-321)

- Motor vehicles weighing under 2,850 lbs. used as collector item $5.00
- Motor vehicles weighing 2,850 lbs. and over used as collector item $10.00
- Personalized license plates, $25 in addition to other fees, $10 for renewal or transfer to another vehicle. Must be renewed by end of grace period or plate will be available to another requesting such plate.
- Motorcycles/Quadricycles (used on public roads) $53.25
- Motorcycles/Quadricycles (used on public roads and off-road) $114.50
- Trailers less than 6,000 lbs. (declared weight) $61.25
- Trailers 6,000 lbs. or more (declared weight) $148.25
- Travel trailers under 16 feet $72.00
- Travel trailers 16 feet and longer $152.00

TAXATION OF MOTOR VEHICLES

(MCA 61-3-537)

- Local option vehicle tax - up to 0.7% may be assessed.

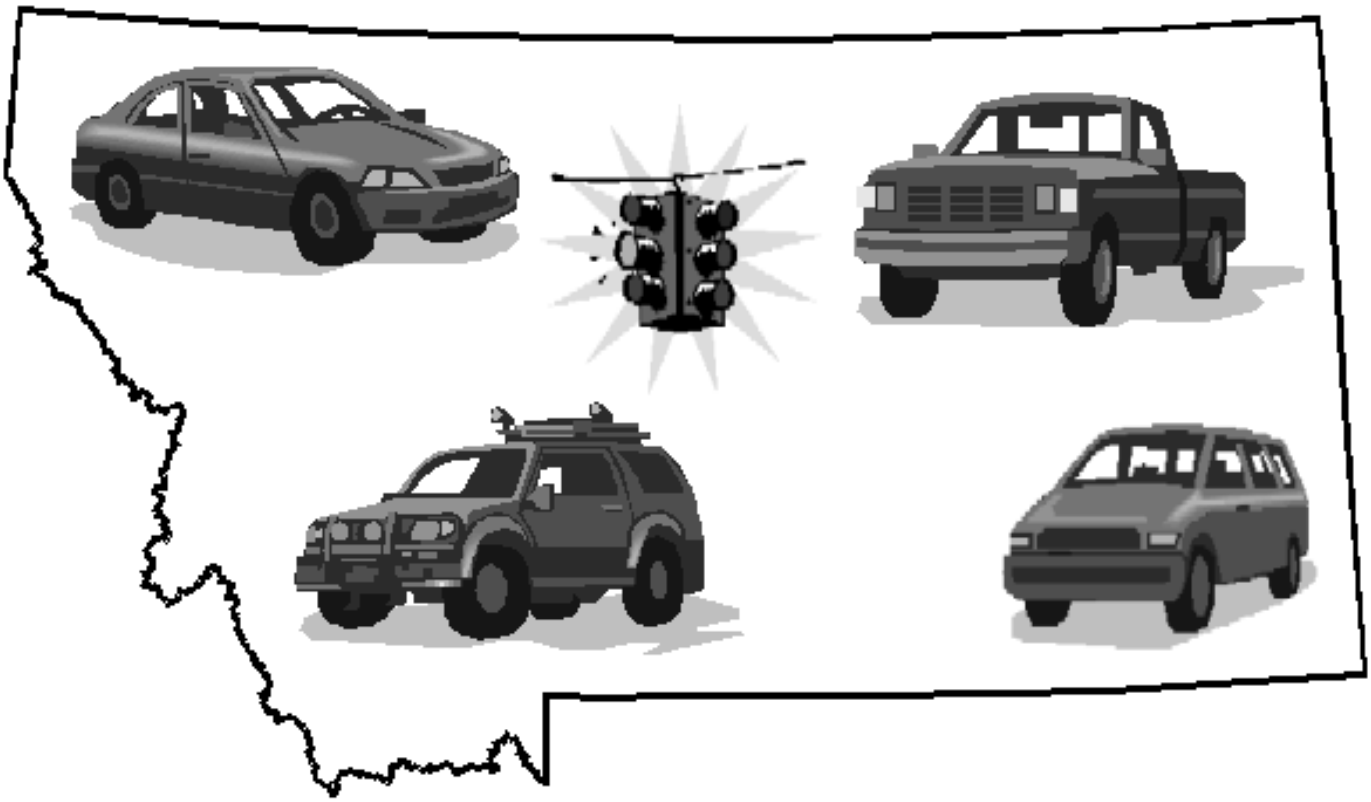
SCHEDULE OF FEES

Motor Homes

- Less than 2 years old $282.50
- 2 years old and less than 5 years old $224.25
- 5 years old and less than 8 years old $132.50
- 8 years old and older $97.50

2011 - 2012

MONTANA DRIVER LICENSE MANUAL



The Montana Department of Justice, Motor Vehicle Division attempts to provide accommodations for any known disability that may interfere with a person participating in any service, program, or activity of this document and auxiliary aids will be provided upon request.

For information please contact the Motor Vehicle Division at (406) 444-3292 or TTY (406) 444-1987.

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