

Summer Driving Tips

For many of us, summertime usually means vacation travel. While summer plans may look a little different this year, now is still a good time to review these summer driving safety tips. Prevention and planning may take a little time up front but will spare you from dealing with the consequences of a breakdown—or worse yet, a highway crash—later.

Keep Kids Safe

In and Around the Car

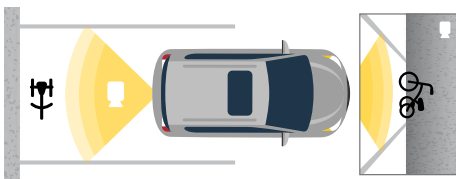


Heatstroke

There are other dangers to children in and around cars that you should know. For example, heatstroke can occur when a child is left unattended in a parked vehicle or gains unsupervised access. Never leave children alone in the car—not even for a few minutes. Vehicles heat up quickly. Even if the outside temperature is in the 70s and the windows are cracked, the temperature in a vehicle can rapidly reach deadly levels. A child's body temperature rises 3 to 5 times faster than that of an adult.

Visit [NHTSA.gov/Heatstroke](https://www.nhtsa.gov/Heatstroke) to learn more tips and reminders to prevent heatstroke.

Backing Out/Parking



Before you back out of a driveway or parking spot, prevent backovers by walking around your vehicle to check for children running and playing. When using a backup camera, remember that kids, pets, and objects may be out of view but still in the path of your vehicle. When children play, they are often oblivious to cars and trucks around them. They may believe that motorists will watch out for them. Furthermore, every vehicle has a blind zone. As the size and height of a vehicle increases, so does the "blind zone" area. Large vehicles, trucks, SUVs, RVs, and vans are more likely than cars to be involved in backovers.

Stock Your Vehicle

Even a well-maintained vehicle can break down, so it's advisable to put together an emergency roadside kit to carry with you. A cell phone tops the list of suggested emergency kit contents since it allows you to call for help when and where you need it. Suggested emergency roadside kit contents include:

- Cell phone and charger
- First aid kit
- Flashlight
- Flares and a white flag
- Jumper cables
- Tire pressure gauge
- Jack (and ground mat) for changing a tire
- Work gloves and a change of clothes
- Basic repair tools and some duct tape (for temporarily repairing a hose leak)
- Water and paper towels for cleaning up
- Nonperishable food, drinking water, and medicines
- Extra windshield washer fluid
- Maps
- Emergency blankets, towels and coats

Before You Go



Check for Recalls

Owners may not always know that their vehicle has been recalled and needs to be repaired. NHTSA's VIN lookup tool lets you enter a Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) to quickly learn if a specific vehicle has not been repaired as part of a safety recall in the last 15 years. Check for recalls on your vehicle by searching now: [NHTSA.gov/Recalls](https://www.nhtsa.gov/Recalls). And sign up for email recall alerts at [NHTSA.gov/Alerts](https://www.nhtsa.gov/Alerts).



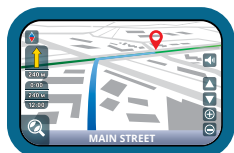
Get Your Car Serviced

Regular maintenance such as tune-ups, oil changes, battery checks, and tire rotations go a long way toward preventing breakdowns. If your vehicle has been serviced according to the manufacturer's recommendations, it should be in good condition to travel. If not—or you don't know the service history of the vehicle you plan to drive—schedule a preventive maintenance checkup with your mechanic right away.



Know Your Car

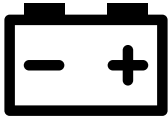
Read your vehicle's manual to familiarize yourself with the features on your vehicle — such as antilock brakes and electronic stability control — and how the features perform in wintry conditions. When renting a car, become familiar with the vehicle before driving it off the lot.



Plan Your Travel and Route

Before heading out, make sure to check the weather, road conditions, and traffic. Don't rush through your trip, and allow plenty of time to get to your destination safely. And always familiarize yourself with directions and maps before you go, even if you use a GPS system, and let others know your route and anticipated arrival time.

Vehicle Safety Checklist



Battery

Have your mechanic check your battery, charging system, and belts, and have them make any necessary repairs or replacements. For hybrid-electric vehicles, keep gasoline in the tank to support the gasoline engine.



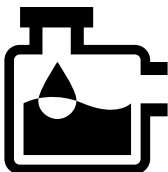
Lights

Check your headlights, brake lights, turn signals, emergency flashers, and interior lights. Be sure to also check your trailer brake lights and turn signals, if necessary.



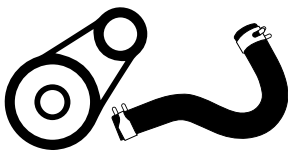
Cooling System

Make sure you have enough coolant in your vehicle, and that the coolant meets the manufacturer's specifications. See your vehicle owner's manual for specific recommendations on coolant. You or a mechanic should check the cooling system for leaks, test the coolant, and drain or replace old coolant as needed.



Fluid Level

Check your vehicle's oil level periodically. As with coolant, if it's time or even nearly time to have the oil changed, now would be a good time to do it. In addition, check the following fluid levels: brake, automatic transmission or clutch, power steering, and windshield washer. Make sure each reservoir is full; if you see any signs of fluid leakage, take your vehicle in to be serviced.



Belts and Hoses

Look under the hood and inspect all belts and hoses to make sure there are no signs of bulges, blisters, cracks, or cuts in the rubber. High summer temperatures accelerate the rate at which rubber belts and hoses degrade, so it's best to replace them now if they show signs of obvious wear. While you're at it, check all hose connections to make sure they're secure.



Wiper Blades

After the heavy toll imposed by winter storms and spring rains, windshield wiper blades may need to be replaced. Like rubber belts and hoses, wiper blades are vulnerable to the summer heat. Examine your blades for signs of wear and tear on both sides. The blades can also deform and fail to work properly in both directions. If they aren't in top condition, invest in new ones before you go.

Vehicle Safety Checklist *continued*



Air Conditioning

Check A/C performance before traveling. Lack of air conditioning on a hot summer day affects people who are in poor health or who are sensitive to heat, such as children and older adults.



Floor Mats

Improperly installed floor mats in your vehicle may interfere with the operation of the accelerator or brake pedal, increasing the risk of a crash. Be sure to follow the manufacturer's instructions for mat installation, use retention clips to secure the mat and prevent it from sliding forward, and always use mats that are the correct size and fit for your vehicle.

Tire Safety

Make sure each tire is filled to the vehicle manufacturer's recommended inflation pressure, which is listed in your owner's manual and on a placard located on the driver's side door frame. The correct pressure is NOT the number listed on the tire. Be sure to check tires when they are cold, which means the car hasn't been driven for at least three hours. Read through for safe tire tips:

- Inspect your tires at least once a month and before long road trips. It only takes about five minutes. Check your spare tire as well.
- Check out [NHTSA.gov/Tires](https://www.nhtsa.gov/Tires) for tire ratings before buying new ones.
- Look closely at your tread and replace tires that have uneven wear or insufficient tread. Tread should be at least 2/32 of an inch or greater on all tires.
- Check the age of each tire. Some vehicle manufacturers recommend that tires be replaced every six years regardless of use, but check your owner's manual to find out.
- For more information on tire safety, visit NHTSA's [Tires](https://www.nhtsa.gov/Tires) page.



Safety First



Protect Yourself and Your Loved Ones

Buckle Up. Every Trip. Every Time. Ensure that everyone else in your vehicle is buckled-up in age- and size-appropriate car seats, booster seats, or seat belts.

Protect the Children

When traveling with children, take every precaution to keep them safe.

- Remember that all children under age 13 should always ride properly buckled in the back seat.
- Make sure car seats and booster seats are properly installed and that any children riding with you are in the right seat for their ages and sizes. See NHTSA's [child passenger safety recommendations](#) to find [out how to select the right car seat](#) for your child's age and size. To learn more and find a free car seat inspection station near you, please visit the [Child Car Seat Inspection Station Locator](#).
- Never leave your child unattended in or around your vehicle.
- Always remember to lock your vehicle and to keep your keys out of reach when exiting so children do not play or get trapped inside.

On the Road



Stay Alert!

Keep your gas tank close to full whenever possible, and, on longer trips, plan enough time to stop to stretch, get something to eat, return calls or text messages, and change drivers or rest if you feel drowsy.

Avoid Risky Driving Behaviors

You know the rules: Do not text or drive distracted; obey posted speed limits; and always drive sober. Both alcohol and drugs whether legal or illicit can cause impairment. It is illegal to drive impaired by any substance in all states – no exceptions. Alcohol and drugs can impair the skills critical for safe and responsible driving such as coordination, judgment, perception, and reaction time.

