

SAFETY SNAPSHOTS:

City Driving – Watch Those Intersections!

Driving a car is one of the most routine activities we engage in, but it's also one of the most dangerous. More than 40,000 people are killed in motor vehicle accidents each year. These deaths translate into lifetime odds of 1-in-100 of dying in a motor vehicle accident.

The principal causes of motor vehicle deaths, based on the most recent National Safety Council statistics, are:

Collision between Motor Vehicles	18,200
Collision with Fixed Object	13,500
Pedestrian Accidents	5,700
Noncollision Accidents	5,500
Collision with Pedalcycle	700
Collision with Train	300
Other Collision	100
Total	44,000

Another discouraging number associated with motor vehicles is that 1-in-2 of us will suffer a temporary or permanent disabling injury* in a motor vehicle accident. With odds like these, your only answer is to develop a defensive driving attitude when you get into a car. This includes wearing seat belts, obeying speed limits, and driving defensively under all weather and traffic conditions. Driving a car should be one of life's pleasures, not one of life's tragedies.

** A disabling injury is an injury that disables you beyond the day of the injury.*

City Driving

To Jack, right-turn-on-red was the greatest thing since sliced bread. He was a person on the go, a man in a hurry. To him every city intersection was just one more obstacle standing between him and his next appointment. Right-turn-on-red was his license to never stand still. Moving, moving, keep that car moving. Bad habits breed bad results, and right-turn-on-red soon progressed to "rolling stop through red" and "ignore



no-right-turn-on-red warnings.” He finally came to his senses the day he was broadsided by a city bus and spent several weeks stuck in his hospital bed.

City driving is filled with hassles and delays, but these minor inconveniences aren't going to be avoided through reckless or rude behavior. The best advice is to maintain a calm and patient attitude.

Surviving Intersections

Almost 50 percent of all city driving collisions occur at intersections, usually because a driver failed to yield the right-of-way. A recent Insurance Institute for Highway Safety study reports that red-light runners are responsible for an estimated 260,000 crashes every year, about 750 of which are fatal. Worse, the number of deaths related to red light running is rising!

To keep intersections safe, remember these tips:

- The vehicle on the left always yields to the vehicle on the right.
- Rolling stops can be a dangerous habit. You can miss spotting a vehicle and cause a collision.
- As you approach a “stale green light” cover the brake with your foot and be prepared to stop. Indications of a stale light include: traffic flowing smoothly, considerable cross-traffic, blinking pedestrian signals, and people standing on the corner.
- When a red light turns green, check to see that traffic has stopped on the intersecting street. Look left, then right, then scan left before you proceed. You invite disaster if you don't check for oncoming vehicles, pedestrians, and cyclists.
- Turning right on a red light is allowed only when it is legal, your vehicle has come to a complete stop, traffic is clear, and pedestrians are clear of the crosswalk. Always take the few extra moments to look for a no-turn-on-red sign.
- When you encounter a yellow light, always stop if it is safe to do so. The purpose of a yellow light is to allow you time to clear an intersection you have already entered, not one you are approaching.

Roadside Distractions

- A lack of consideration can cause trouble. Demanding the right of way can lead to a confrontation that benefits no one.
- Keep your eyes moving for potential problems such as children playing, cyclists, pets, and cars backing from driveways. Look into your rear view mirror often.
- Establish a high visual horizon. You should be able to see one block ahead of you.
- Blind spots are everywhere. If you can't see beyond an object, slow down or change lanes to improve your vision.
- Don't tailgate. Maintain a three second following distance.
- When waiting to make a left turn, point your wheels straight ahead. If you are hit from behind with your wheels turned to the left, you would be forced into traffic.
- Whenever possible, avoid getting boxed in. Speed up or slow down as required.
- Don't fiddle with the radio or other nonessential equipment in heavy traffic.
- If a left turn is risky because of heavy traffic or poor vision, make a right turn and use an alternate route.

Backing Up

- Always check behind your car. Pedestrians and small children can be hidden from your view.
- Use your outside mirrors to help your vision.
- Do not back into busy streets, highways and pedestrian crosswalks.
- Keep your foot firmly on the brake before shifting into reverse.
- Back slowly. Glance over each shoulder out the windows.