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THE DRIVER LICENSE

Anyone operating a motor vehicle or motorcycle on public roadways in the State of New Mexico must have a driver license. You are also required to have a New Mexico driver license if you are a resident.

TYPES OF DRIVER LICENSES — GRADUATED LICENSE SYSTEM

If you are under the age of 18, you must participate in the graduated driver license system until you meet the requirements for an unrestricted license. The three different levels of Graduated driver license (GDL) are:

- Instructional Permit — also known as a "learners permit"
- Provisional License
- Unrestricted Drivers License

Instructional Permit

A permit allows you to operate a motor vehicle when supervised by another driver who is at least 21 years of age and who is licensed to drive that type of vehicle. In all vehicles except motorcycles, the licensed driver must sit in the right front seat. On motorcycles, the licensed driver must follow the learner.

To obtain an instructional permit you must be at least 15 years of age and pass the knowledge test and vision test. If you are under the age of 18, you must also have a consent form signed by your parent or guardian. The driver must retain the permit for six months.

The requirements and restrictions for an Instructional Permit are as follows:

- The minimum age for an instructional permit is 15 years of age.
- A person 15 years or older must be enrolled in and attending a driver education course approved by the Traffic Safety Bureau and includes DWI education and practice driving.
- The driver must have an approved instructor occupying the seat beside the driver; or,
- The driver is with a licensed driver 21years of age or older who has been licensed for at least three years in this state or any other state.
- The driver must retain the instructional permit for at least six months.

Provisional License

A provisional license allows you to drive without the supervision of another driver — except during the hours of midnight and 5:00am. Unless a licensed driver that is 21 years old or older is in the vehicle, you may not have more than one other passenger under the age of 21 who is not a member of your immediate family in the vehicle.

The requirements and restrictions for a Provisional license are as follows:

- The driver must complete not less than 50 hours of practice driving, including not less than 10 hours of nighttime driving. The parent or guardian shall certify that the driver has completed the practice driving part.
- The driver must pass a written and road test in addition to a vision screening.
- The minimum age to receive a provisional license is 15 years and 6 months if the driver has held an instructional permit for 6 months.

- The driver must have not been convicted of a traffic violation in the 90 days prior to applying for a provisional license.
- The driver may not operate a motor vehicle upon public highways between the hours of midnight and 5:00 AM. A provisional licensee may drive at any hour if:
  - Accompanied by a licensed driver twenty-one years or older.
  - Required by family necessity as evidenced by a signed statement of a parent or guardian.
  - Required by medical necessity as evidenced by a signed statement of a parent or guardian.
  - Driving to and from work as evidenced by a signed statement from the licensee's employer.
  - Driving to and from school or a religious activity as evidenced by a signed statement of a school, religious official or a parent or guardian.
  - Required due to a medical emergency.

Unrestricted Driver License

The requirements and restrictions for an unrestricted driver license are as follows:

- The driver must have held a provisional license for the 12- month period immediately preceding the date of application for a driver license.
- The driver must not have been convicted of a traffic violation 90 days prior to applying for a driver license.
- The driver must not have any traffic violations pending at the time of the application for a driver license.
- The driver must not have been adjudicated guilty or have an offense pending involving the use of alcohol or drugs during the provisional period.

DRIVER LICENSE RENEWAL

Your driver license is valid for either 4 or 8 years. You may renew the license anytime up to 90 days before or 30 days after it expires. You will need to bring your current license and one other proof of identity. You may be required to take a vision, knowledge and in special cases, a driving test.

KEEPING THE DRIVER LICENSE

You must drive safely at all times to keep your driver license. You can lose your driving privileges for any of the following:

- A conviction for driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs,
- Refusing to be tested for alcohol or drugs if you are asked to do so by a police officer,
- Leaving the scene of an accident in which you are involved, without identifying yourself,
- Giving false information when you apply for a driver license,
- Failing to settle a financial judgment made against you for damages resulting from a motor vehicle accident,
- Attempting to change the information on your license or using someone else's license when attempting to purchase an alcoholic beverage,
- Failing to appear for a re-examination when requested to do so by the MVD,

- Using a motor vehicle to commit a felony or causing the death of someone in a motor vehicle accident,
- Having too many points on your driving record, or
- Letting someone else use your driver license.

SAFETY BELTS AND CHILD RESTRAINTS

Before you drive, always fasten your safety belts and make sure all your passengers are using safety belts or child restraints. 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 while using safety belts, your chances of being hurt or killed are greatly reduced**. In the State of New Mexico, it is illegal to drive without wearing safety belts.**

If your vehicle has a two-part safety belt system, be sure to wear both the lap belt and the shoulder belt. Wearing either part alone 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.

The law requires that all children under the age of 12 wear appropriate safety restraints while the vehicle is in motion. Children under the age of 24 months, or weighing less than 60 pounds, must be secured in an approved safety device. Children should be secured in the rear seat. Never secure a child in the front passenger side, especially if your vehicle has an air bag. If you are in a crash and the bag deploys, your child could be injured. A number of organizations will loan you a child safety device if you are unable to afford one. For further information, contact the Traffic Safety Bureau at (505) 827-0427 or toll free at 1-800-541-7952.

RULES OF THE ROAD

There are traffic rules that say where, when and how fast you can drive. These rules help to keep traffic moving safely. Rules of the road include traffic control devices, right-of-ways, and parking rules.

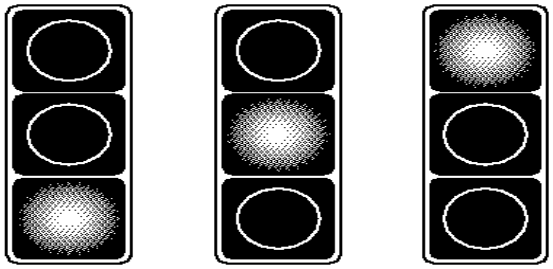
TRAFFIC CONTROL DEVICES

Traffic control devices include traffic signals, signs and pavement markings. Traffic control also can be provided by law enforcement, highway personnel or school crossing guards. You must obey directions from these people.

Traffic Signals

Traffic signals are lights that tell you when or where to stop and go. A “green” light means you can go if it is safe. A “yellow” light means caution and a “red” light means stop.

Traffic lights are usually at intersections and are green, yellow and red, from bottom to top, when together. There are some intersections and other locations where there are single green, yellow or red lights.



A steady GREEN traffic light means you can go through the intersection. You must yield to emergency vehicles and others as required by law. If you are stopped and then the light turns green, you must allow crossing traffic to clear the intersection before you go ahead. A GREEN arrow means you can safely turn in the direction of the arrow. There should be no on-coming or crossing traffic while the arrow is green. If you are turning left, a steady green traffic light means you may turn but only when safe to do so. Oncoming traffic has the right-of-way. Be alert for signs that prohibit left turns. When turning right or left, watch for pedestrians crossing in front of your vehicle.

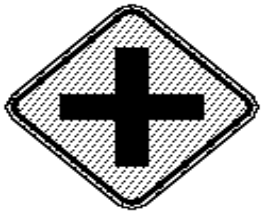
A steady YELLOW traffic light means the traffic light is about to change to red. You must stop if it is safe to do so. If you are in the intersection when the yellow light comes on, do not stop but continue through the intersection. A flashing YELLOW traffic light means slow down and proceed with caution. A YELLOW arrow means that the protection of a green arrow is ending and if you are turning in the direction of the arrow, you should prepare to stop and give the right of way to oncoming traffic before turning.

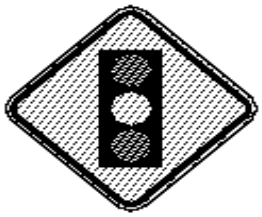
A steady RED traffic light means stop. In some locations, there may be a small, very bright blinking light in the middle of the red light. This device is to alert you of the red light and that you must stop. You must wait until the traffic light turns green and there is no crossing traffic before you may move ahead. If you are turning right, you may turn after coming to a full stop, if it is safe to do so and if there is no sign prohibiting the turn on a red light. Be careful of pedestrians crossing in front of your vehicle. A flashing RED traffic light means the same as a stop sign. You must come to a full stop and then may proceed when it is safe to do so. A RED arrow means you must stop and you cannot go in the direction of the arrow. You may proceed when the red arrow goes off and a green arrow or light goes on.

Traffic Signs

Traffic signs tell you about traffic rules, hazards, where you are, how to get where you are going and where services are located. The shape and color of these signs give clues to the type of information they provide.

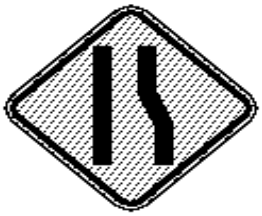
***Warning Signs*—**These signs are usually yellow with black lettering or symbols and most are diamond shaped. These signs warn you to slow down and be prepared to stop if necessary. It warns you that a special situation or a hazard is ahead. Some common warning signs are shown below.


Cross Road


Signal Ahead


Merging Traffic


Two-Way Traffic


Right Lane Ends


School Zone


Pedestrian Crossing


School Crossing


Divided Highway


Divided Highway Ends



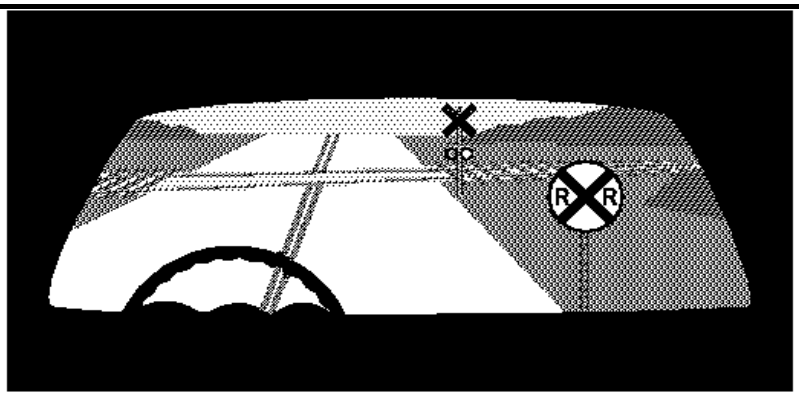
Low Bridge


Slippery When Wet


Hill

Railroad Crossing Warning Signs **—**Many railroad crossings have signs or signals to warn drivers. Never try to beat a train across the tracks. Never start to cross if there is not enough room for your vehicle on the far side and if you will have to stop on the tracks. Wait 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. Remember that trains are large and may be moving faster than they look. Some common railroad crossing warning signs and signals are shown in the illustration below.

- A round yellow warning sign with an "X" symbol and black "RR" letters is placed along the road before you get to a railroad crossing.
- A white, X-shaped sign or "crossbuck" with "Railroad Crossing" on it is located at the railroad crossing. This sign has the same meaning as a "Yield" sign. You must yield to crossing trains.



- At some crossings, along with the crossbuck sign, you will see side-by-side lights that will flash alternately when a train is approaching. When the lights are flashing, you must stop. At some crossings there is also a crossing gate that will lower when a train is coming. Do not drive around the gate. Some crossings also have a bell or a horn that will sound. Do not cross until the bell or horn has stopped.
- Crossings with more than one train track will often post a sign that shows the number of tracks. These signs warn you that there is more than one track and there may be more than one train crossing. Not all crossings with more than one train track will have these signs so it is important to check for more than one track before crossing.
- School buses, taxis and other vehicles for hire that carry passengers and trucks that transport explosives, gasoline or other dangerous materials must stop at least 15 feet from a railroad crossing before proceeding. Further, a school bus driver must open the doors of the school bus before crossing.

***Work Area Signs*—**These construction, maintenance or emergency operations signs are generally diamond or rectangular shaped, orange with black letters or symbols and warn you that people are working on or near the roadway. These warnings include reduced speed, detours, slow moving construction equipment and poor or suddenly changing road surfaces. In work areas, traffic may be controlled by a person with a sign or flag. You must obey these people.

***Regulatory Signs*—**These signs are square, rectangular, or have a special shape and are usually white, red or black with black, red, white or green letters or symbols. They give you information about rules for traffic direction, lane use, turning, speed, parking and other special situations.

Some regulatory signs have a red circle with a red slash over a symbol. These signs prohibit certain actions, i.e., no left turn, no right turn, no U-turn, etc.

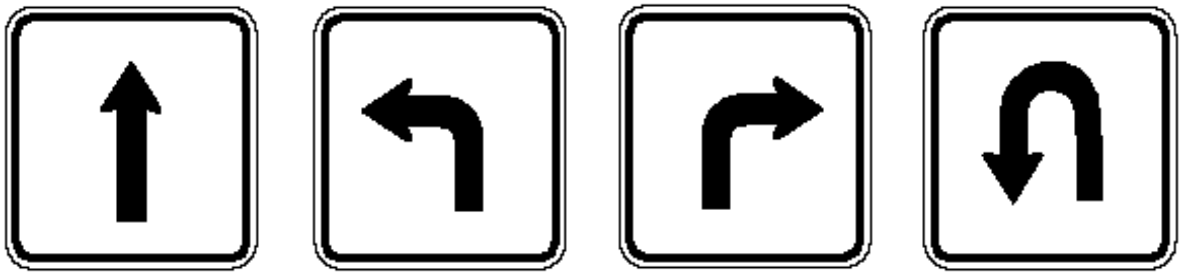


Common types of regulatory signs are:

***Speed Limit Signs*—**These signs indicate the maximum safe speed allowed or the minimum safe speed required. The maximum limit should be driven only in ideal driving conditions and you must reduce your speed when conditions require it. For example, you should reduce your speed when the roadway is slippery, during rain, snow, icy conditions, or when it is foggy and difficult to see clearly down the road.

Some high-speed roads have minimum speed limits and you are required to travel at least this fast so as not to be a hazard to other drivers. If the minimum posted speed is too fast for you, you should use another road.

***Lane Use Control Signs*—**These signs tell you where you can go, where you can turn and often use an arrow symbol. These signs can be located on the side of the road or hanging over the lane of travel. Sometimes arrows may be painted on the road as a supplement to the signs.



***No Passing Signs*—**These signs tell you where passing is not permitted. Passing areas are based on how far you can see ahead. They consider unseen hazards such as hills and curves, intersections, driveways and other places a vehicle may enter the roadway. These signs, along with pavement markings, indicate where you can pass another vehicle, the beginning and ending of a passing zone or where you may not pass. Where it is permitted to pass, you may do so only if it is safe. Be aware of road conditions and other vehicles.



***Stop Sign*—**A stop sign has eight sides and is red with white letters. You must come to a full stop at a stop sign or stop line, if one is present. You must wait until crossing vehicles and pedestrians have cleared and pull forward only when it is safe to do so.

***Yield Sign*—**A yield sign is a downward pointing triangle. It is red and white with red letters. It means you must slow down and yield the right-of-way to traffic in the intersection you are crossing or roadway you are entering.

***Do Not Enter Sign*—**A square sign with a white horizontal line inside a red ball means you cannot enter. You will see this sign at roadway openings that you should not enter such has exit ramps where you would be going in the wrong direction, in crossovers on divided roadways and at numerous locations on one-way streets.

***Slow Moving Vehicle*—**A reflective orange triangle on the rear of a vehicle means it is traveling less than 25 mph. You may see this decal on construction equipment, in rural areas on farm vehicles or horse drawn wagons or carriages.

Common types of Guide Signs are:

***Destination Signs*—**These signs are square or rectangular shaped and are green or brown with white lettering. They show directions and distance to various locations such as cities, airports, or state lines or to special areas such as national parks, historical areas or museums.

***Service Signs*—**These signs are square or rectangular shaped and are blue with white letters or symbols. They show the location of various services such as rest areas, gas stations, campgrounds or hospitals.

***Route Number Signs*—**The shape and color of route number signs indicate the type of roadway: interstate, U.S., state, city or county road. When planning a trip, use a road map to determine your route. During the trip, follow the route signs to prevent you from getting lost.

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.

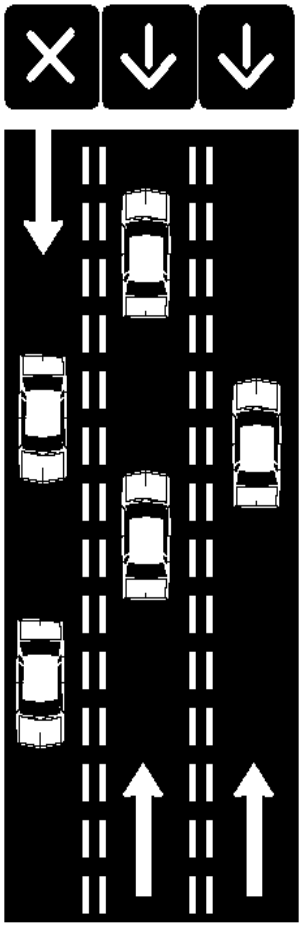
***White lane marking*—**Multiple lanes of travel in the same direction are separated by white lane markings. A dashed white line between lanes of traffic means that you may cross it to change lanes if it is safe to do so. A solid white line between lanes of traffic means that you should stay in your 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 crosswalk. Crosswalks define the area where pedestrians may 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.

***Yellow lane markings*—**Lines separating traffic moving in opposite directions are yellow. A dashed yellow line between opposing lanes of traffic means that you may cross it to pass if it safe to do so. Some passing zones have signs that tell you where passing is permitted 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 yellow lines between lanes of traffic means neither side can pass. You may cross a solid yellow line to turn into a drive way if it safe to do so.

OTHER LANE CONTROLS

Reversible Lanes

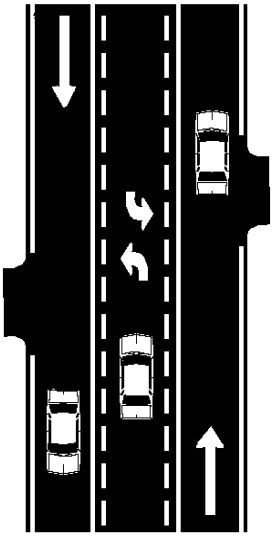


Some travel lanes are designed to carry traffic in one direction at certain times and in the opposite direction at other times. These lanes are usually marked by double-dashed yellow lines. Before you start driving in them, check to see which lanes you can use at that time. There may be signs posted by the side of the road or overhead. Special lights are often used. A green arrow means you can use the lane beneath it; a red "X" means you cannot. 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 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 alternate with left-turn arrows for traffic coming from the other direction. These lanes are marked on each side by a solid yellow and dashed yellow line. In some areas, the shared center lane becomes a "reversible lane" during rush hours. Be sure you can enter the lane before you do so and then only if it is safe to do so.

GENERAL RULES

When there are no signs or 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.

***General driving*—**Never back a vehicle in any travel lane except to parallel park. It is illegal and unsafe to do so. Drivers do not expect a vehicle to be backing towards them and may not realize it until it is too late. If you miss your turn or exit do not back up but go on to where you can safely turn around.

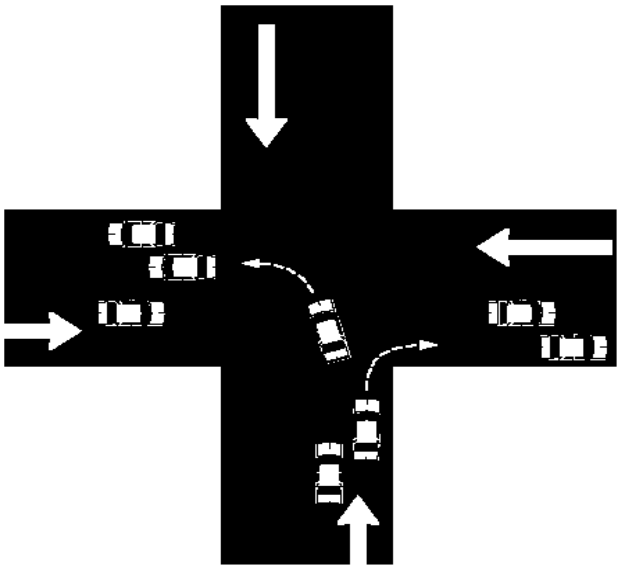
Do not stop in travel lanes for any reason (confusion, breakdown, letting out a passenger). Keep moving until you can safely pull off the road.

On a road with two or more lanes traveling in the same direction, 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 or exiting traffic, use the center travel lane.

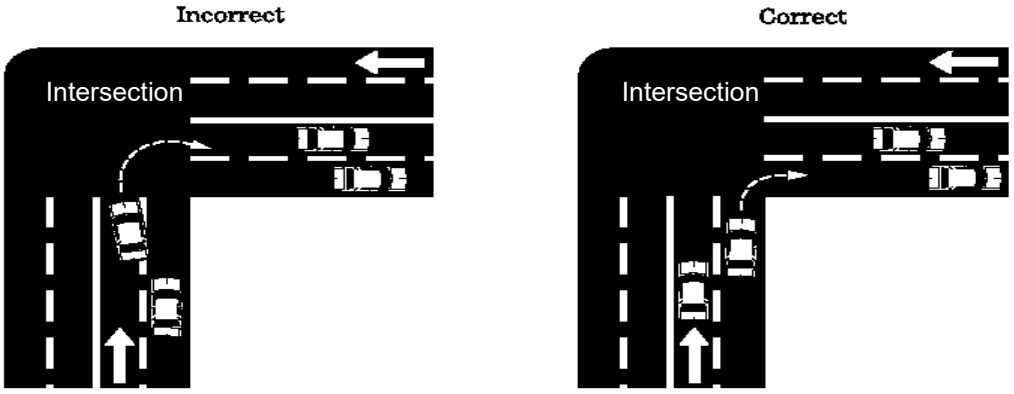
Unless told to do so by officials, never drive on the shoulder of the road.

***Passing*—**On multi-lane roads, the left-most lane is intended to be used for passing 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. Always use turn signals when changing lanes or turning



***Right turns*—**On right turns, avoid swinging wide to the left before turning to make the turn. 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, be sure to leave room for oncoming vehicles to turn left in front of you.

***Multiple lanes turning*—**If there are signs or lane markings that allow for two or more turning lanes, stay in your lane during the turn.

RIGHT-OF-WAY

Where vehicles or pedestrians are likely to meet one another and there are no signs or signals to regulate traffic, there are rules on who must yield the right-of-way. These rules tell 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. You must always yield to a pedestrian, even if the pedestrian is not obeying traffic controls.

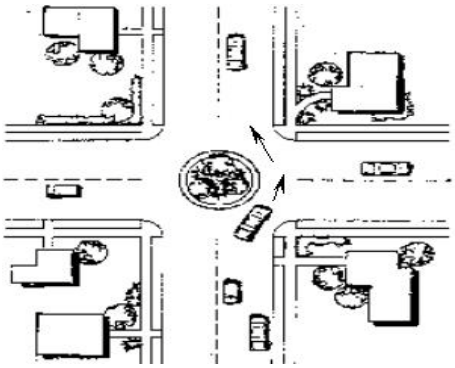
The following right-of-way rules apply at intersections:

- Drivers must yield where necessary to avoid striking pedestrians who are legally crossing the road.
- 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.
- The White Cane Law, 28-7-1 NMSA (1978) enables persons who are blind, visually impaired, or who have other physical disabilities access to all roads and sidewalks. The driver of a vehicle approaching a totally or partially blind pedestrian who is carrying a cane predominantly white or metallic in color, with or without a red tip, or using a guide dog shall take all necessary precautions to avoid injury to such blind pedestrian, and any driver who fails to take such precautions shall be liable in damages for any injury caused to such pedestrian.
- Drivers turning left must yield to oncoming vehicles 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, yield sign or traffic signal, drivers must yield to vehicles coming from the right.
- At a 4-way stop, the driver reaching the intersection first, goes first (after coming to a complete stop). If more than one vehicle arrives at the same time, the vehicle on the right goes first.
- Drivers entering a road from a driveway, alley or roadside must yield to vehicles already on the main road.
- 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.

- 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.
- You must yield the right-of-way to a police vehicle, fire engine, ambulance or other emergency vehicle using a siren, air horn or 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. If you are in an intersection, drive through the intersection before you pull over.
- You must stop for a school bus that is stopped with its red lights flashing whether it is on your side of the road, the opposite side of the road or at an intersection you are approaching. You are not required to stop if the bus is traveling towards you and the roadway is separated by a median or other physical barrier. After the school bus red lights have stopped flashing, watch for children along the side of the road and do not proceed until they have completely left the roadway and it is safe to proceed.
- You must yield the right-of-way to trains crossing the roadway.

ONE-WAY STREETS AND CIRCLES

The State has the right to turn any public road into a one-way road. If they do this, they must post signs that tell drivers it is one-way. You may only drive on these roads in the direction the sign tells you to drive.



In some areas, you may see a "traffic circle," also called a "rotary traffic island." When you drive around a "traffic circle" you must drive on the right side of the island.

SPEED LIMITS

Everyone who operates a motor vehicle must obey all speed limits. Your vehicle control is affected by the speed at which you drive.

Maximum

15 mph within a school zone, with a posted speed limit

30 mph in business or residential areas, unless posted otherwise

55 mph on public highways, unless posted otherwise

75 mph on rural interstate highways, unless, posted otherwise

Minimum

No one should drive at a speed less than the minimum posted speed limit. If no minimum is posted, drive so that you do not interfere with regular traffic flow. You should travel on the right-

hand side of the road when your driving speed is slower than other vehicles. Speed should be adjusted for adverse conditions and for the type of vehicle and to avoid accidents.

PARKING

Drivers are responsible for making sure that their vehicle is not a hazard when it is parked. Whenever you park, 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 vehicles 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 curb side 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 vehicle. It is a good habit to lock the doors whenever you leave your vehicle.
- 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 towards the side of the road or curb. This way, if your vehicle 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:

- in an intersection,
- on a crosswalk or sidewalk,
- in a construction area if your vehicle will block traffic,
- within 30 ft. of a traffic signal, stop sign or yield sign,
- within 25 ft. of a crosswalk at an intersection,
- within 15 ft. of a fire hydrant,
- within 50 ft. of a railroad crossing,
- more than 18 in. from the curb,
- within 20 ft. of a fire station driveway on the same side of the street or within 75 ft. 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 overpass or in a tunnel or underpass,
- on the wrong side of the street,
- in a space marked for the handicapped, unless you have a handicap license plate, tag or sticker,
- on the road side of a parked vehicle (double parking),
- on railroad tracks, or

- wherever a sign says you cannot park.

Other parking restrictions are indicated by curbs painted:

- white—indicates that only short stops are permitted,
- yellow—indicates a loading zone or some other restriction.
- red—indicates a fire zone with no parking or standing permitted.
- blue—indicates handicap parking only.

TRAFFIC VIOLATIONS

Many common traffic violations (speeding, failure to wear seat belts, etc.) carry "points". Points are assigned based on the traffic violation. If a driver has twelve or more points within a twelve-month period, their driver's license will be suspended for one year. You can obtain a listing of all traffic offenses that carry points from the Motor Vehicle Division. Other traffic violations (driving without insurance, or driving without vehicle registration) do not carry points; instead, these types of offenses will require the driver to appear in court. This could lead to more fines and/or a suspended license.

SAFE DRIVING TIPS

No driver manual can teach you how to operate a vehicle or be a safe driver. Driving requires skills you can only gain through instruction and practice. The following offers some basic driving information.

BASIC DRIVING

Starting

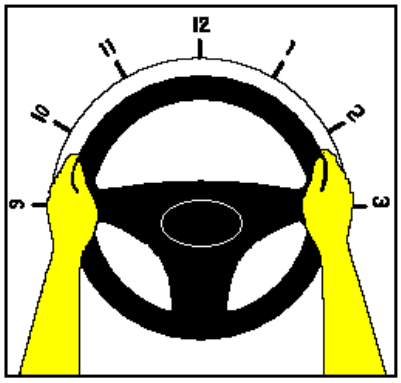
Check the vehicle owner's manual for how to best start the vehicle. Make sure the parking brake is on before you start the vehicle. If the vehicle has a manual transmission, it must not be in gear and in some vehicles the clutch must be depressed. For a vehicle that has an automatic transmission, you must put the shift selector in "park."

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 go too fast or stall when shifting between gears.

Steering

Place both hands on the steering wheel firmly on each side, in an even or balanced position. Imagining the steering wheel is a face on a clock. One balanced position for steering control is at the 10 o'clock and 2 o'clock positions. Some drivers prefer placing their hands at 9 and 3 o'clock. Always keep your knuckles outside the rim of the wheel.



Look well down the road and on both sides of the road, not at the road just 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 sharp corners, turn the steering wheel using the "hand-over-hand" technique. When you complete a turn, straighten out the steering wheel by hand. Letting it slip through your fingers could be dangerous.

Speeding

Be aware of your speed and check the speedometer often. People are not very good at judging how fast they are going. It is easy to be traveling much faster than you think. This is especially true when you leave high-speed roads and are driving on much slower local roads.

Follow the speed limit signs. They are there for your safety.

Stopping

Be alert so that you know when you will have to stop well ahead of time. Stopping suddenly is dangerous and usually indicates a driver who is 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, you can make a more gradual and safer stop.

Scanning

To be a good driver, you must know what is happening around your vehicle. You must look ahead, to the sides and behind the 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 you directions.

Look ahead—In order to avoid last minute braking or the need to turn, you should look well down the road. 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 side the road. Looking well down the road will also help you to steer straighter with less weaving.

Safer drivers tend to look at least 10 seconds ahead of their vehicle. 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.

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 to both the left and right for approaching vehicles and/or crossing pedestrians. If stopped, look to both the left and right just before you start moving. Look across the intersection before you start to move to make sure the path is clear all the way through the intersection and you will not block it if you have to stop.

Before you turn left across oncoming traffic, look for a safe gap in the 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.

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. You may also turn left from a one-way street into another one-way street unless prohibited.

Do not rely on traffic signals or signs to tell you 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 especially important just after the light has turned green. This is when people on the cross street are most likely to hurry through the intersection 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, playgrounds and schoolyards.

***Railroad crossings*—**As you approach any railroad crossing slow down and 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. Assuming that a train is not coming is one of the leading causes of fatalities at railroad crossings. Make sure there is room for your vehicle on the far side before you cross the tracks.

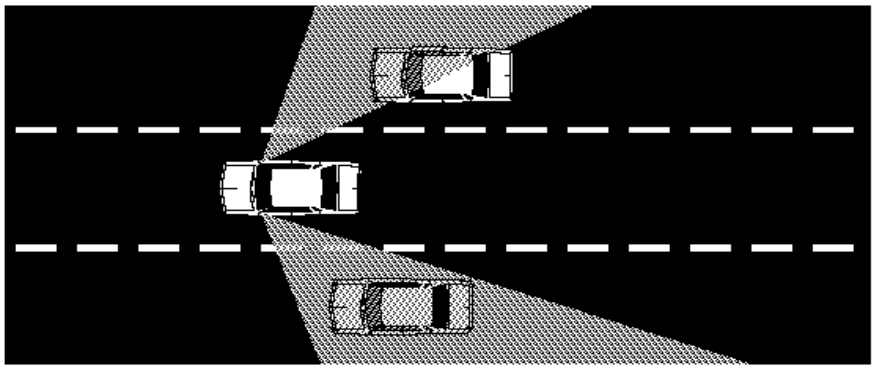
At crossings with more than one track, wait until the passing train is well down the track before starting to cross. Another train may be hidden by the one that just passed.

***Look behind*—**Besides watching traffic ahead of you, you must check 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 for vehicles behind you 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:

- Look in your rear-view 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 must turn your head and look to see vehicles in your blind spot.



- 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 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 vehicles 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 cars and trucks. 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 you back up—It is hard for you to see behind your vehicle. Try to do as little backing as possible. In a shopping center, try to find a parking space you can drive through, so you can drive forward when you leave. Where backing 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 slowly; your vehicle is much harder to steer while you are backing.
- Whenever possible, use a person outside the vehicle to help you back.

When going down a long or steep hill—Check your mirrors when you are going down hills or mountains. Vehicles often build up speed going down a steep grade. Be alert for large trucks and buses that may be going too fast.

Use Your Lights

It is much harder to see at night. Here are some things you can do that will help you see better:

- Use your high beams whenever there are no oncoming vehicles. High beams let you see twice as far as low beams. It is important to use high beams on unfamiliar roads, in construction areas or where there may be people along the side of the road.
- Dim your high beams whenever you come within about a one-block distance of an oncoming vehicle.
- Use your low beams within 200 feet when following another vehicle or when in heavy traffic.
- Use the low beams in fog or when it is snowing or raining hard. Light from high beams will reflect back, causing glare and making it more difficult to see ahead. Some vehicles have fog lights that you also should use under these conditions.
- Do not drive at any time with only your parking lights on. Parking lights are for parking only.

COMMUNICATING

Crashes 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 that you are there.

***Use headlights*—**Besides helping you to 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 may be 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. Even if you turn them on a little early, you will help other drivers see you.
- Whenever driving and lights are necessary, use your headlights within at least 500 feet when approaching another car. Parking lights are for parked vehicles only.
- When driving away from a rising or setting sun, turn on your headlights. Drivers coming towards 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 a driver is not paying attention or 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
- when another vehicle is in danger of hitting you
- when you have lost control of your vehicle and are moving towards someone

***Use emergency signals*—**If your vehicle breaks down on a highway, make sure that other drivers can see it. All too often crashes occur because a driver did not see a stalled vehicle until it was too late to stop.

If available, use your 2-way radio or telephone to notify authorities that your vehicle 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 have to stop:

- Get your vehicle off the road and away from traffic if at all possible
- Turn on your emergency flashers to show you are having trouble
- Try to stop where other drivers have a clear view of your vehicle if you cannot get your vehicle off the roadway. (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.
- Never stand in the roadway. Do not try to change a tire if it means you have to be in a traffic lane.

***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. You will be in his/her blind spot. Either speed up or drop back so the other driver can see your vehicle more easily.
- When passing another vehicle, get through the other driver's blind spot as quickly as you can. The longer you stay there, the longer you are in danger of him/her turning into you.
- Never stay along side a large vehicle such as a truck or bus. These vehicles have large blind spots and it hard for drivers of large vehicles 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. This will give them time to react if needed, or at least not to be surprised by what you do.

***Signal when you change direction*—**Signaling gives other drivers time to react to your moves. You should use your turn signals before you change lanes, turn right or left, merge into traffic or park.

- Get into the habit of signaling every time you change direction. Signal even when you do not see anyone else around. It is easy to miss someone who needs to know what you are doing.
- Signal at least 100 feet before you make your turn.
- 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, others 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. Do not slow down or stop suddenly without signaling to the driver behind you (if you have time).

The faster your vehicle is going, the more distance it will take to turn, slow or stop.

ADJUSTING TO ROAD CONDITIONS

There are many road conditions where you must slow down. For example, you must slow down before a sharp 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 a grip the tires have with the road depends on the type and condition of the tires and the type and condition of the road surface.

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 or dirt roads as you do on concrete or 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, then 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 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.

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 and thus can be colder and icier than other roadways.
- When the temperature is around the freezing point, ice 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 the oil in the asphalt to come to the surface. The road is 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 start to ride up on the water, like water skis. 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.

***Wildlife on the roadway*—**We share our state with many different kinds of wildlife. Most of New Mexico is still rural and there are many areas rich in animal life. As you drive through our mountains, forests, meadows, and river valleys, be alert for wildlife on the roads. Watch out for these large game animals: deer, elk, pronghorn antelope, black bears, and cougars. Each year there are thousands of accidents between large animals and vehicles. Many people are hurt or killed this way. These accidents also cut down on the amount of wildlife in New Mexico. And they damage many vehicles and raise insurance costs.

Large game animals (especially deer) live all over the state. Watch for elk in the western three-quarters of the state. Watch for antelope in the eastern part of the state or in open plains. And keep an eye out for black bears and cougars in the mountains.

Driving with Wildlife in Mind

Scan the road as you drive. Watch the edges of the highway for wildlife that are about to cross. Watch for animal crossing signs. These signs warn you that vehicles have hit wildlife in this area before. And if you see animals that have been hit, slow down. You may be in an animal crossing area.

To Avoid Hurting an Animal

- Be especially watchful for wildlife at dawn, dusk, and in the first few hours after darkness falls. Many animals are most active at these times.
- Assume that animals won't get out of your way.
- Remember that where one animal is crossing, there may be more.
- Animals with hooves, such as deer, often slow down on slick surfaces. So be ready to slow down to let them cross.

ADJUSTING TO TRAFFIC

***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. The vehicle you are passing may change lanes suddenly or on a two-lane road, an oncoming vehicle may appear suddenly. Slow down and keep pace with other traffic. Speeding does not save more than a few minutes an hour.

Going much slower than other vehicles can be just as bad as speeding. It tends to make vehicles bunch up behind you and causes the other traffic to pass you. If vehicles are piled-up behind you, pull over when safe to do so and let them pass.

***Entering into traffic*—**When you merge with traffic, try to enter at the same speed that traffic is moving. 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 or you will not have 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.

***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, 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 lose speed on long or steep hills and it takes longer for these vehicles to get up to speed when they enter traffic.
- Farm tractors, animal-drawn vehicles and roadway maintenance vehicles usually go 25 mph or less. These vehicles should have a slow-moving vehicle decal (an orange triangle) on the back.

***Trouble spots*—**Wherever people or traffic gather, 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, 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 when leaving 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 or running or riding into the street without looking.
- Railroad crossings—you need to make sure that there are no trains coming and that you have room to cross. Some crossings are bumpy so you need to slow down to safely cross.

HOW WELL CAN YOU 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 further 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 a city block in length.

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 see an object in your path, it may be too late to stop without hitting it.

Here are some things that limit how well you can see and hints you can follow 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.

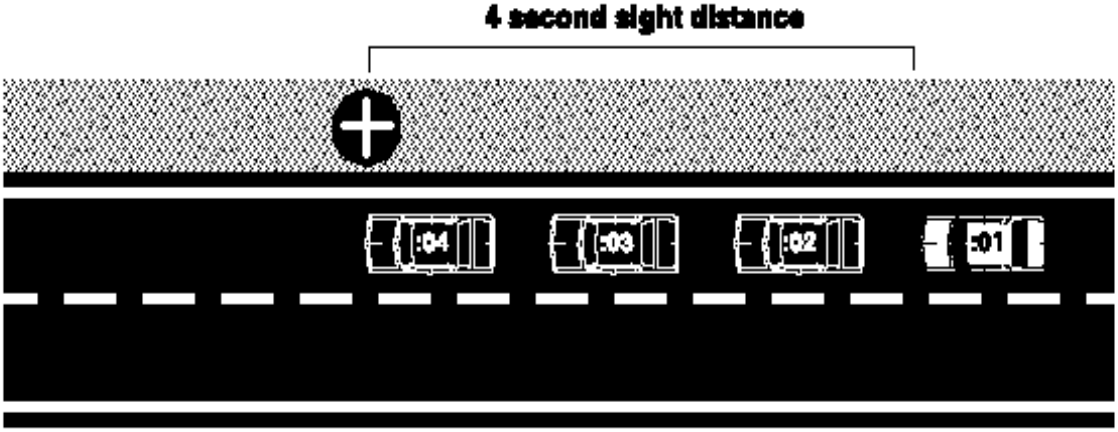
***Rain, fog or snow*—**In a very heavy rain, snowstorm or thick fog, you may not be able to see much more than 200 feet ahead. When you cannot see any farther than that, you cannot safely drive faster than 30 mph. In a very heavy downpour, you may not be able to see well enough to drive. If this happens, 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 many times. If a vehicle 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 vehicles*—**Vehicles parked along the side of the road may block your view. People may be ready to get out of a vehicle or walk out from between parked vehicles. Give parked vehicles as much room as you can.

***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 a telephone pole). Start counting "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 should also use the "Four Second Sight Distance Rule" at night to make sure you are not "over-driving your headlights."



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. 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 from drivers following too closely to be able to stop before hitting the vehicle ahead when it 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.

- Watch 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. ("One-thousand-one, one-thousand-two, one-thousand-three")
- You are following too closely if you pass the mark before you finish counting.
- 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 where you need more space in front of your vehicle. For example, you may need a four second following distance to be safe; (1) on slippery roads, (2) when following motorcycles, (3) when you have a heavy load or are pulling a trailer, (4) when following emergency vehicles, (5) when approaching railroad crossings or, (6) when stopped on a hill or incline.

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 or turn. Some examples are stopping to pick up or let off passengers, parallel parking, and driving slowly.

Space to the Side

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

- Make room for vehicles entering on a roadway that has two or more lanes.
- Keep extra space between your vehicle and parked cars.
- Give extra space to pedestrians or bicycles, especially children.

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 when your lane merges with another travel lane.

- To be safe, do not try to merge into a gap that is too small.
- If you want to cross several lanes, take them one at a time.

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 to get up to speed.

- When you cross traffic, you need room to get all the way across.
- If you are turning left, make sure there are no vehicles or pedestrians blocking your path.
- Even if you have the green light, do not start across the intersection if there are vehicles blocking your way.
- When you cross railroad tracks, make sure you can cross without having to stop on the tracks.

Space to Pass

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 vehicles at once. Be safe. As a general rule only pass one vehicle at a time.

- Oncoming vehicles—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 will have enough space to pass safely.
- 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 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 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, your view of people, vehicles or trains can be blocked by the vehicle you are passing. 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. Due to lane restrictions, you might lose your space and it may not be safe to pass:
    - people or bicyclists near the road,
    - a narrow bridge or other situation that causes reduced lane width, or
    - 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. Do not count on other drivers to make room for you.
- Railroad grade crossing—Do not pass if there is a railroad grade crossing ahead.

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 rear-view mirror, it is safe to return to the driving lane.

SHARING THE ROAD

BICYCLES ARE VEHICLES

Bicycle drivers on roads have the same rights and responsibilities as drivers of cars.



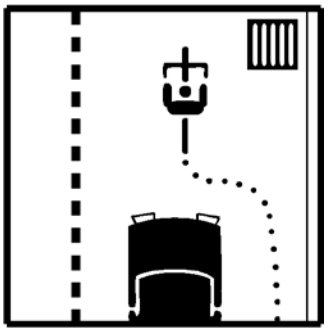
1. Motor vehicle drivers sharing the road with bicycles are required to:

- Keep a safe distance when passing a bicyclist, trying for at least five feet, and passing them only when safe and legal to do so.
- Provide the bicyclist with extra time and space to merge and use turn lanes like other vehicles.
- Treat the bicycle as a legal, slow-moving vehicle such as a backhoe.

Special Considerations for Driving Near Bicycles:

- While bicycles should usually stay on the right side of the roadway, they are legally allowed to take the whole lane by riding in the center of the traffic lane when necessary. Bicyclists will

typically take the whole lane to prepare for a left turn, to avoid being squeezed on a narrow street, or to avoid hazards, grates and debris, like in this picture, for example.



- Do not make a sudden right turn after passing a bicyclist on your right. Instead, slow down and merge behind the bicyclist before turning.
- Some bicyclists, especially young children, will behave unexpectedly. Stay watchful for sudden movements and lane changes.

2. Bicycle drivers sharing the road with motorists are required to:

- Obey all traffic signals, laws and signs, just as if driving a car, including night-time use of a bright headlight and good, rear reflector.
- Travel in the same direction as traffic, making left and right turns in the same way cars do.
- Use these hand signals to indicate turning and stopping.



Special Considerations for Bicycling in Traffic:

- Bicycles may be difficult for motorists to see. Wear bright colors, use proper lighting, and be predictable.
- The safest way to ride is as part of the traffic, going with the flow of the normal traffic pattern.
- Adults should, and minors must, wear a well-fitting helmet.

3. What are sharrows?



"Sharrows" are "shared lane pavement markings." They are painted on the pavement when a road is too narrow for side-by-side road sharing with slower vehicles. They indicate that bicyclists are encouraged to take the whole travel lane and that motorists shall yield to the bicyclist as needed.

As a motorist, what should I do in the presence of sharrows?

- Slow down and yield to bicyclists in the roadway.
- Pass bicyclists only when the roadway width allows bicyclists to move to the right.
- Try to give bicyclists at least five feet of clearance when passing.



As a bicyclist, what should I do in the presence of sharrows?

- As a bicyclist, you may ride on the center of the sharrow.
- Keep a safe distance from the "door zone" of parked cars.
- Move right to let vehicles pass when it is safe to do so.

"Cyclists fare best when they act and are treated as drivers of vehicles."

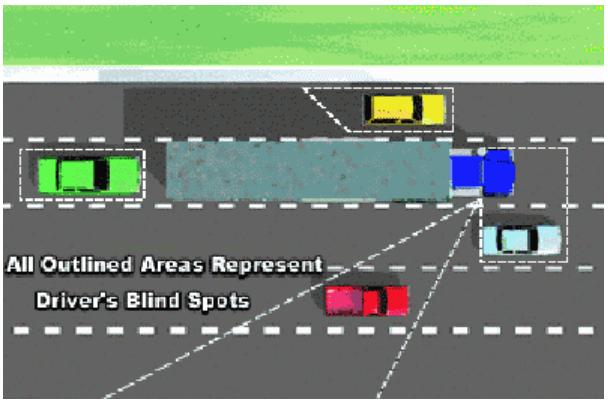
LARGE TUCKS AND RVS

It pays to learn about large trucks and RVs (recreational vehicles). You'll be safer if you know what big rigs can and cannot do on the road.

Braking—Large trucks and RVs take longer to stop than a car going the same speed. An average car going 55 mph can stop in about 400 feet. But a large truck could take almost 800 feet to stop. So don't pull in front of a big rig and suddenly slow down or stop. The driver may not be able to stop quickly enough to avoid crashing into you.

Turning—Big trucks and RVs need more room to make turns. They often swing wide to make a right turn. When you follow a big rig, look at its turn signals before you start to pass. If you think the truck is turning left, wait a second and check the turn signals again. The driver may really be turning right.

Trucker's Blind Spots



You might think truckers can see the road better because they sit up higher. It's true that they can see better in front of them and they have bigger mirrors. But there are still large areas they can't see. These are called their "blind spots" or the "NO ZONE." Don't drive in a trucker's blind spots. You might be in the way if the trucker swerves to avoid a hazard. In general, if you can't see the driver in the side mirror, the driver can't see you.

Avoid These Common Mistakes When Driving Around Large Trucks and RVs

- Don't cut in front of a truck or RV in traffic to reach your exit or turn. Cutting into the open space in front of a truck is dangerous.
- Don't drive beside a large truck or RV. If you drive beside the truck or RV, they may not be able to swerve to miss a hazard in the road.
- Always pass a large truck or RV on the left side. After you pass, move ahead of it. Don't stay in the driver's blind spot.

Don't follow too closely or tailgate. If you drive too close behind a truck, the trucker may not know you are there. Remember that a big truck or RV may look like it's going more slowly than it is.

BE IN SHAPE TO DRIVE

VISION

New Mexico 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.

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. 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. Many people have problems judging distances and speeds. 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, or when judging the speed of a train before crossing tracks safely.
- **Night vision—**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 be very careful when you do.

If you need to wear glasses or contact lenses for driving, remember to always wear them when you drive. Avoid using dark glasses or tinted contact lenses at night, even if you think they help with glare. The problem is that they cut down the light that you need to see clearly.

FATIGUE

You cannot drive as safely when you are tired. You do not see as well, nor are you as alert. 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. When you are tired you could fall asleep behind the wheel and crash, injuring or killing yourself or others.

There are things you can do to help 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.
- Do not take any medicine that can make you drowsy.
- 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 hour 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.
- Never drive if you are sleepy. It is better to stop and sleep for a few hours than to take a chance thinking you can stay awake. If possible switch driving tasks with another driver so you can sleep while they drive.

DRINKING AND DRIVING

Alcohol is involved in about 40% of the traffic crashes in which someone is killed. DO NOT DRINK AND DRIVE!

People who drive after drinking risk heavy fines, higher insurance rates, loss of license, and jail sentences.

Why is Drinking and Driving So Dangerous?

Alcohol reduces all of the important skills you need to drive safely. Alcohol goes from your stomach into your blood and to all parts of your body. It reaches your brain in 20 to 40 minutes. 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 and reduces your ability to know when to stop drinking. 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 skills decrease. You will have trouble judging distances, speeds and the movement of other vehicles. You will also have trouble controlling your vehicle.

Effects of Alcohol

THERE IS NO SAFE AMOUNT OF ALCOHOL! Even one drink of alcohol can affect your driving. With two or more drinks in your bloodstream you are *impaired* and could be arrested.

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

Your body gets rid of one alcoholic drink per hour. There is no way to sober up quickly. Coffee, fresh air, exercise or cold showers will not help. Time is the only thing that will sober you up.

If you are going to a social situation where alcohol will be served, use a designated driver or use public transportation or a cab, if available.

Alcohol and The Law

You are not allowed to buy alcohol, consume alcohol or be in possession of alcohol unless you are 21 years of age. If you are arrested for drinking and driving the penalties are severe. You can be arrested for driving with a blood alcohol content (BAC) of .08% or more. In New Mexico, if you are under 21, you also can be arrested for BAC at .02%. BAC is the percentage of alcohol in your blood and is usually determined by a breath, blood or urine test. If a police or traffic officer asks you to take a BAC test and refuse to do so, you can lose your driver license for one year.

If you are found guilty of DWI and it is your first conviction, you will pay stiff fines and court costs, and you could be sentenced to jail. You will also be ordered to treatment and to install an ignition interlock device on your vehicle. MVD has the authority to revoke your driver's license. Subsequent DWI convictions will result in increased fines, more jail time, and a longer license revocation. Any DWI conviction will remain on your driving record for twenty-five years.

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 and even many of the drugs you can buy without a prescription. Drugs taken for headaches, colds, hay fever or other allergies or those 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, unable to concentrate, and they can affect your vision. Other prescription drugs can affect your reflexes, judgment, vision and alertness in ways similar to alcohol. Driving under the influence of any drug that makes you drive unsafely is against the law.

If you are driving, check the label before you take a drug for warnings about its effect. If you are not sure 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. These drugs could multiply the effects of alcohol or have additional effects of their own. These effects not only reduce your ability to be a safe driver but also 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 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.

Some conditions can be very dangerous. In New Mexico drivers who have epilepsy, diabetes, adverse heart conditions and other medical problems are required to send the Motor Vehicle Division periodic medical statements signed by their physicians. Consult the Motor Vehicle Division for more information.

- Epilepsy—People with epilepsy should have frequent check-ups, practice careful management of medicine, and be stable and seizure free for a 6-month period before being issued a driver's license.
- Diabetes—Diabetics who take insulin should not drive when there is any chance of an insulin reaction, blackout, convulsion or 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 for you 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 or other vision problems.
- Heart condition—People with heart diseases, high blood pressure or circulation problems or those in danger of a blackout, fainting or a heart attack should not get behind the wheel. If you are seeing a doctor for a heart condition, ask if the condition could affect your driving safely.

EMOTIONS

Emotions can affect safe driving. You may not be able to drive well if you are overly worried, excited, afraid, angry or depressed.

- 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, down or are upset about something, try to keep your mind on your driving. Some find listening to the radio helps.

CELLULAR PHONE USAGE

Be especially careful if you must use a cell phone while in your vehicle. Dialing, or even just talking on a cell phone, can be a dangerous distraction from safe driving. Pull over to the side of the road to place or take a call whenever possible. Also remember that it is illegal in some towns to use a cell phone while driving unless you are using a hands-free device.

EMERGENCIES

All drivers sooner or later will find themselves in an emergency situation. 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 preventive measures greatly reduces the chance your vehicle will have a problem. Possible vehicle failures and what you can do if they happen are listed below.

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 does not 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 does not work, start shifting to lower gears and look for a safe place to slow to a stop. Make sure the vehicle 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

The motor keeps going faster and faster:

- Keep your eyes on the road.
- Quickly shift to neutral.

- Pull off the road when 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 avoiding a collision, drivers have three options: stop, turn or speed up.

Stopping Quickly

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

With ABS—If you have an antilock 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 antilock 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. Once you have turned away or changed lanes, you must be ready to keep the vehicle under control. 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 and stop or slow down.

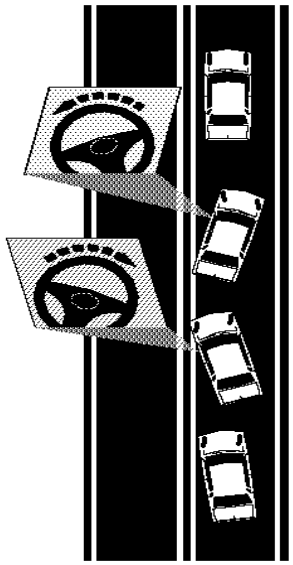
Without ABS—If you do not have ABS, you must use a different procedure to turn quickly. You should step on the brake pedal, then let-up and turn the steering wheel. Braking will slow the vehicle, put more weight on the front tires, and allow for a quicker turn. Do not lock-up the front wheels while braking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

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. Skids are caused by drivers traveling too fast for conditions.



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. Besides your safety belts, there are a couple of other things that could help prevent more serious injuries.

Hit From the Rear

If your vehicle is hit from the rear, your body will be thrown backwards. 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.

Hit From the Side

If your vehicle is hit from the side, your body will be thrown towards the side that is hit. 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 about to be hit from the front it is important to try and have a "glancing blow" rather than being struck head on. This means that if a collision is going to happen, you should 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. You must use your lap and shoulder belts to keep you behind the wheel and to protect you if your vehicle has a second crash.

ACCIDENTS AND THE FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITY LAW

Do not stop at an accident unless you are involved or if 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 other rescue vehicles.

If you are involved in an accident you must stop. If you are involved in an accident with a parked vehicle, you must try and locate the owner. You may want to carry a basic vehicle emergency kit. These kits have emergency flares, first aid supplies and basic tools.

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 or cause another crash.
- 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 power lines down with wires in the road, 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 this to the police when they are called.
- Do not move the injured unless they are in a burning vehicle or in other immediate danger of being hit by another vehicle. 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 pressure directly on the wound with your hand or with a cloth. Even severe bleeding can almost always be stopped or slowed by putting 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, including 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 vehicle, 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.

Financial Responsibility Law (66-5-205/208)— Motor Vehicle Insurance

Everyone who operates a motor vehicle in New Mexico must have a motor vehicle liability insurance policy. The Mandatory Financial Responsibility Act requires that proof of such insurance be carried in

the vehicle at all times. The law specifies that you must carry a minimum amount of coverage to enable you to pay for damages arising because of motor vehicle accidents.

Minimum Amounts:

$25,000	Bodily injury to or death of one person in any on accident.
$50,000	Bodily injury to or death of two or more persons in any one accident.
$10,000	Injury to or destruction of property of others in any one accident.

Failure to have insurance could result in non-issuance or suspension of your vehicle registration, and surrender of the license plates, as well as possible criminal penalties.

MOTORCYCLES

Passing

Ride in the left portion of the lane at a safe following distance to increase your line of sight and make you more visible. When you are ready to pass:

- Signal and check for oncoming traffic. Use your mirrors and turn your head to look for traffic behind.
- Move into the left lane and accelerate. Select a lane position that doesn't crowd the car you are passing and provides space to avoid hazards in your lane.
- Ride through the blind spot as quickly possible.
- Signal again, and complete mirror and head checks before returning to your original lane.

Remember, passing must be completed within posted speed limits, and only where permitted. Know your signs and road markings.

Cars Alongside

Do not ride next to cars or trucks in other lanes if you do not have to. You might be in the blind spot of a car in the next lane, which could switch into your lane without warning. Cars in the next lane also block your escape if you come upon danger in your own lane. Speed up or drop back to find a place clear of traffic on both sides.

Braking

Your motorcycle has two brakes: one each for the front and rear wheel. Use both of them at the same time. The front brake is more powerful and can provide as much as three-quarters of your total stopping power. The front brake is safe to use if you use it properly. Remember:

- Use both brakes every time you slow or stop. Using only the rear brake for "normal" stops will not permit you to develop the habit or skill of using the front brake properly in an emergency. Squeeze the front brake and press down on the rear. Grabbing at the front brake or jamming down on the rear can cause the brake to lock, resulting in control problems.
- Apply both brakes at the same time. The sooner you apply the front brake, the sooner it will start slowing you down.
- If you know the technique, using both brakes in a turn is possible, although it should be done very carefully. When leaning the motorcycle, some of the traction is used for cornering. Less traction is available for stopping. A skid can occur if you apply too much brake. Also, using the front brake incorrectly on a slippery surface may be hazardous.

- Some motorcycles have integrated braking systems that link the front and rear brakes together by applying the rear brake pedal. (Consult the owner's manual for detailed explanation on the operation and effective use of these systems.)

Passing Parked Cars

When passing parked cars, stay toward the left of your lane. You can avoid problems caused by doors opening, drivers getting out of cars, or people stepping from between cars. If oncoming traffic is present, it is usually best to remain in the center lane position to maximize your space cushion.

A bigger problem can occur if the driver pulls away from the curb without checking for traffic behind. Even if he does look, he may fail to see you. In either event, the driver might cut into your path. Slow down or change lanes to make room for someone cutting in.

Cars making a sudden U-turn are the most dangerous. They may cut you off entirely, blocking the whole road and leaving you with no place to go. Since you cannot tell what a driver will do, get the driver's attention. Sound your horn and continue with caution.

Lane Sharing

Cars and motorcycles need a full lane to operate safely. Lane sharing is usually prohibited.

Riding between rows of stopped or moving cars in the same lane can leave you vulnerable to the unexpected. A hand could come out of a window; a door could open; a car could turn suddenly.

Discourage lane sharing by others. Keep a center of the lane position whenever drivers might be tempted to squeeze by you. Drivers are most tempted to do this in heavy, bumper-to-bumper traffic, if they want to pass you, when you are preparing to turn at an intersection, or when you are getting in an exit lane or leaving a highway.

Lane Positions

In some ways the size of the motorcycle can work to your advantage your lane position to:

- Increase your ability to see
- Protect you lane from other drivers and allow you to be seen
- Communicate your intentions
- Avoid other's blind spots
- Avoid wind blast from other vehicles
- Avoid surface hazards
- Provide an escape route

Select the appropriate path to maximize your space cushion and make yourself more easily seen by others on the road.

In general, there is no single best position for riders to be seen and to maintain a space cushion around the cycle. No portion of the lane need be avoided, including the center. If hazardous conditions exist on both sides of you, the center of the lane is usually your best choice.

The center of a lane can be oily. It collects the drippings from cars, particularly at intersections. This strip is usually no more than two feet wide. You can operate to the left or right of the grease strip and still be within your traffic lane. Unless the road is wet, the average center strip permits adequate traction to

ride on safely. Avoid riding on big build-ups of oil and grease that are usually found at very busy intersections or toll booths.

Ride in the portion of the lane where you are most likely to be seen. Depending on the traffic situation, move to the portion of the lane where it will be difficult for other drivers to miss seeing you.

Signals

The signals on a motorcycle are similar to those on a car. However, due to a rider's added vulnerability, signals are even more important. They tell others what you plan to do. Use them anytime you plan to change lanes. Use them even though you think no one else is around. It's the car you don't see that is going to give you the most trouble. Your signal lights also make you easier to spot.

When you enter onto a freeway, drivers approaching from behind are more likely to see your signal blinking and make room for you. Turning your signal light on before each turn reduces confusion and frustration for the traffic around you. Once you turn, make sure your signal is off or a driver may pull directly into your path, think you plan to turn again. Use your signals at every turn so drivers can react accordingly. Do not make them guess what you intend to do.

Helmet Requirements

New Mexico Law requires all motorcycle drivers and passengers under 18 years old to wear a helmet. However, it is recommended that ALL motorcycle drivers and passengers wear a helmet.

Whichever style you choose, you can get the most protection by making sure that the helmet:

1) Meets U.S. Department (DOT) standards. Helmets with labels from the American National Standards institute (ANSI) or the Snell Memorial Foundation give you and added assurance of quality;
2) Fits snugly, all the way around; and
3) Has no obvious defects such as cracks, loose padding or frayed straps.

Whatever helmet you decide on, keep it securely fastened on your head when you ride.

Using Your Mirrors

Traffic conditions can change quickly. Your need to know what is going on behind you can help you make a safe decision about how to handle trouble ahead.

Frequent mirror checks should be part of your normal scanning routine. Make a special point of using your mirrors:

- ***When you are stopped at an intersection.*** Watch cars coming up from behind. If the driver isn't paying attention, he could be on top of you before he sees you.
- ***Before you change lanes.*** Make sure no one is about to pass you.
- ***Before you slow down.*** The driver behind may not expect you to slow, or maybe unsure about where you will slow. For example, you signal a turn and the driver thinks you plan to turn at a distant intersection, rather that at a nearer driveway.

Most motorcycles have rounded (convex) mirrors. These provide a wider view of the road behind than flat mirrors do. They also make cars seem father away than they really are. If you are not used to convex mirrors, get familiar with them. Practice with your mirrors until you become a good judge of distance. Even then, allow extra distance before you change lanes.

Riding At Night

At night it is harder for you to see and to be seen. To compensate, you should:

- ***Reduce your speed.*** Ride even slower than you would during the day, particularly on roads you don't know well. This will increase your chances of avoiding a hazard.
- ***Increase distance.*** Distances are harder to judge at night than during the day. Your eyes rely on shadows and light contrasts to determine how far away an object is and how fast it is coming. These contrasts are missing or distorted under artificial lights at night. Open up a three second following distance and allow more distance to pass and to be passed.
- ***Use your high beam.*** Get all the light you can. Use your high beam whenever you are not following or meeting a car. Wear reflective materials.

Be flexible about lane position. Change to whatever portion of the lane is best able to help you see, be seen and keep and adequate space cushion.

Keep Your Distance

A close motorcycle group takes up less space on the highway, is easier to see and is less likely to be separated. However, it must be done properly.

Staggered Formation—This is the best way to keep ranks close yet maintain an adequate space cushion. The leader rides in the left side of the lane, while the second rider stays one second behind in the right side of the lane.

A third rider maintains in the left position, two seconds behind the first rider. The fourth rider would keep a two second distance behind the second rider. This formation keeps the group close and permits each rider a safe distance from others ahead, behind and to the sides.

Passing in Formation—Riders in a staggered formation should pass one at a time. First the lead rider should pull out and pass when it is safe after passing, the leader should return to the left position and continue riding at passing speed to open room for the next rider.

When the first rider passes safely, the second rider should move up to the left position and watch for a safe chance to pass. After passing, this rider should return to the right position and open up room for the next rider.

Some people suggest that the leader should move to the right side after passing a vehicle. This is not a good idea. It encourages the second rider to pass and cut back in before there is a large enough space cushion in front of the passed vehicle. It is simpler and safer to wait until there is enough room ahead of the passed vehicle to allow each rider to move into the same position held before the pass.

Single-File Formation—It is best to move into a single-file formation when riding curves, turning, entering or leaving a highway.

Animals

Motorcycles seem to attract dogs. If you are chased, shift down and approach the animal slowly. As you approach it, speed up and leave the animal behind. Do not kick at the animal. Keep control of your motorcycle, and look to where you want to go.

Intersections

The greatest potential for conflict between you and other traffic is at intersections. An intersection can be in the middle of an urban area or at a driveway on a residential street - anywhere traffic may cross your path of travel. Over half of motorcycle/car collisions are caused by drivers entering a rider's right-of-way.

Oncoming cars that turn left in front of you, and cars on side streets that pull into your lane are the two biggest dangers.

There are no guarantees that others see you. Never count on "eye contact" as a sign that a driver will yield. Too often, a driver looks right at a motorcyclist and still fails to "see" him. The only eyes that you can count on are your own. If a car can enter your path, assume that it will.

Increase your chances of being seen at intersections. Ride with your headlight on in a lane position that provides the best view of oncoming traffic. Provide a space cushion around the motorcycle that permits you to take evasive action.

As you approach the intersection, select a lane position to increase your visibility to the driver. Cover the clutch and both brakes to reduce reaction time.

Reduce your speed. After entering the intersection, move away from oncoming vehicles preparing to turn. Do not change speed or position radically. The driver might think you are preparing to turn.

Blind Intersections

If you have a stop sign or stoplight, stop there first. Then edge forward and stop again, just short of where the cross-traffic lane meets your lane. From that position, lean your body forward and look around buildings, parked cars, or bushes to see if anything is coming. Just make sure your front wheel stays out of the cross lane of travel while you're looking.

Wobble

A "wobble" occurs when the front wheel and handlebars suddenly start to shake from side to side at any speed. Most wobbles can be traced to improper loading, unsuitable accessories, or incorrect tire pressure.

Trying to "accelerate out of a wobble" will only make the cycle more unstable. Instead:

- Grip the handlebars firmly, but don't fight the wobble
- Close the throttle gradually to slow the motorcycle. Do no apply the brakes; braking could make the wobble worse
- Move your weight as far forward and down as possible
- Pull of the road as soon as you can to fix the problem

Being Passed

When you are being passed from behind or by an oncoming vehicle, stay in the center portion of your lane. Riding any closer to them could put you in a hazardous situation. Be aware of these dangers:

- ***Other vehicles*****—**A slight mistake by you or the passing driver could cause a sideswipe.
- ***Extended mirrors*****—**Some drivers forget that their mirrors hang out farther than their fenders.
- ***Objects thrown from windows*****—**Even if the driver knows you are there, a passenger may not see you and might toss something on you or the road ahead of you.
- ***Blast of wind from larger vehicles*****—**They can affect your control. You have more room for error if you are in the middle portion when hit by this blast than if you are on either side of the lane.

Do not move into the portion of the lane farthest from the passing vehicle. It might invite the other driver to cut back into your lane too early.

For further information about motorcycle training and safety, please contact:

Motorcycle Safety Foundation

1-877-667-8880

www.msf-usa.org