

Managing a Safe Speed and Following Distance

The following are some suggestions to help you properly manage driving at a safe speed.

MANAGING A SAFE SPEED:

Obey posted speed limits. A driver's speed should never be faster than the rate consistent with existing speed laws, road traffic and weather conditions. Posted speed limits apply only when conditions are favorable.

Reduce speed when your vision is restricted. At night and when fog or other conditions restrict visibility, speed should be reduced to a point that enables you to stop within the distance you can see ahead. Turn off your cruise control and turn on your lights.

Reduce speed when traction is reduced. Always reduce your speed when rain, snow, ice or other adverse road or weather conditions exist. It is difficult for your vehicle to respond as quickly as needed in less than favorable conditions.

Do not overestimate your vehicle's ability to stop.

Reduce speed when approaching any highway/rail grade crossing. Watch for other vehicles in front of you (such as school buses, hazmat trucks, etc.) that may be required to stop at the grade crossing even when a train is not approaching.

Reduce speed for emergency vehicles. Whenever you hear a siren or see emergency lights, pull to the side of the road and stop to permit the emergency vehicle to pass safely. If you encounter an emergency vehicle with flashing lights stopped on the side of the roadway, slow down and, if safely possible, move to the next lane away from the vehicle to allow plenty of space for emergency personnel. This is now a law in many states.

Reduce speed before entering highway work zones. Increase your following distance, and never exceed the posted speed limit, even when highway workers are not present.

Reduce speed appropriately before entering a curve or ramp. Always negotiate curves at a reduced speed consistent with the sharpness of the curve, available sight distance and prevailing road or traffic conditions. Enter the curve or ramp at least 10 miles per hour below the posted advisory speed. Advisory speeds posted on most curve and ramp signs may not give an accurate idea of how fast your vehicle can safely take the curve. These advisory speeds are appropriate for passenger cars and may be too high to permit commercial vehicles to negotiate the curve safely. Some ramps and curves may have a separate advisory speed for commercial vehicles. The condition and stability of your vehicle and especially your load need to be considered at all times. **Do not overestimate your stability.**

Reduce speed in heavy traffic or when traffic slows. A commercial vehicle requires a much longer distance to stop than a passenger car traveling at the same speed. Driver reaction times are the same. However, the braking distance for commercial vehicles versus cars is considerably longer. Be cautious, slow down and increase your following distance as necessitated by traffic conditions.

KNOW YOUR STOPPING DISTANCE TO FOLLOW SAFELY:

You vehicle should maintain at least a one second following distance for each 10 feet of vehicle length, and never less than seven seconds. Add one additional second of following distance for each adverse condition, such as snow, rain, fog, ice, dark or if you are driving over 40 miles per hour, driving on a gravel road, etc.