

Motor vehicle accidents are among the leading causes of death and injury for Texans of all ages. Common-sense practices and preventive maintenance, along with a knowledge of the law, can significantly increase anyone's chances of arriving safely.

1 Know and obey the law:

- ✓ Be aware of and obey posted speed limits.
- ✓ Observe warning signs.
- ✓ Adapt your driving habits to changing weather and road conditions.
- ✓ Keep cell phone use to a minimum and avoid other distractions while driving.
- ✓ Wear seat belts. Insist that others in your vehicle wear belts, too.
- ✓ Be sure all children in the vehicle are properly restrained.
- ✓ Always use turn signals.
- ✓ Don't tailgate.
- ✓ At accident or construction sites, obey directions from uniformed law enforcement officers.
- ✓ Speeding in construction zones now carries double the penalty of normal speeding violations.
- ✓ Don't drink and drive. Don't drive under the influence of drugs.
- ✓ Ask your pharmacist or doctor about side effects from any new drug, whether prescription or over-the-counter.
- ✓ Be aware that combinations of drugs and alcohol can compound the effects of each other.
- ✓ Don't pick up hitchhikers.

2 Use common sense:

- ✓ Always lock your doors.
- ✓ Tell friends or family the route you are traveling and your expected arrival time. Call them if your route or arrival time changes.
- ✓ Don't drive in unfamiliar areas after dark.
- ✓ Park in well-lit areas, preferably with attendants on duty.
- ✓ Have your keys in your hands as you approach your vehicle.
- ✓ Check the interior of your car before entering, even if your doors are locked.
- ✓ If you see a stranger near your car, get help or wait until the stranger leaves.

3 Preventive maintenance is the best way to avoid problems:

- ✓ Check all fluids regularly, with particular attention to battery and radiator fluids in extreme hot and cold weather.
- ✓ Check for leaks. Clear water usually is condensation, but any leak with a petroleum look or smell, or water with a green or pink color, is a sign that trouble is on the way.
- ✓ Check tires (including the spare), windshield wipers and belts for abnormal wear. Check tire air pressure.
- ✓ Keep the fuel tank at least half full.
- ✓ Have your vehicle checked periodically by a professional mechanic.

4 If you have a breakdown:

- ✓ Move your car as far off the roadway as possible.
- ✓ Turn on emergency flashers.
- ✓ Get out of your car away from traffic.
- ✓ Raise your hood. Tie a light-colored cloth to the antenna or door handle.
- ✓ If possible, wait for a uniformed law enforcement officer.
- ✓ If someone other than a uniformed officer offers help, keep your doors locked and ask them to call police for help.
- ✓ Remember the Texas stranded and disabled motorist help line: 1-800-525-5555.