



Chapter 5

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PREVENT A COLLISION

Most collisions are caused by motorist error. A motorist can reduce the chances of a collision by knowing and using the standard collision-prevention formula:

Be alert: Never think the other motorist will not make a driving mistake.

Be prepared: Learn what to do in any situation when you have to act fast, and always expect the unexpected.

Act in time: Try not to panic. Know what to do if something happens suddenly

AGGRESSIVE DRIVING/ROAD RAGE

Emotions can have a great affect on a motorist's driving. If a motorist is angry or excited, he/she should take time to cool off. Aggressive driving is defined as a progression of unlawful driving actions, such as speeding, improper or excessive lane changing, or improper passing. Aggressive drivers fail to consider how their actions behind the wheel may affect other motorists on the road. When behind the wheel, a motorist should always remain calm and follow the rules of the road. Extreme cases of aggressive driving may lead to road rage.

Road rage occurs when motorists lose their tempers or become frustrated because of a traffic disturbance. These aggressive motorists may run stop signs and red lights, speed, tailgate, weave through traffic, pass illegally on the right, make improper and unsafe lane changes, make hand or facial gestures, scream, honk horns or flash high beams. In extreme cases, aggressive motorists may cause a collision.

New Jersey is waging a campaign against road rage. The state has specially trained enforcement patrols to help stop aggressive motorists. To report an aggressive motorist call (888) SAF-ROAD or cell phone #77.

Note: While there are emergency exceptions to the hand held cellular phone law, it is always safest to pull over to the side of the road before making a call.

❖ DISTRACTIONS

Operating any motor vehicle requires the motorist's full attention. In many cases, collisions are caused by a distracted motorist. Inattentive motorists often tailgate, go too fast or drift out of their lanes. They ignore traffic signs and signals, road markings, potential traffic hazards, road conditions and other vehicles. Some causes of inattentive driving are:

- Lighting a cigarette
- Trying to fasten a safety belt while driving
- Reaching across the seat to close a door or look in the glove compartment
- Reaching for coins in pockets while driving up to a toll booth
- Trying to wind or adjust a wristwatch
- Watching children or pets in the vehicle
- Trying to remove a coat
- Reading maps and newspapers
- Eating while driving
- Adjusting a mirror while driving
- Using a cellular phone
- Adjusting the radio or CD player
- Shaving
- Using a laptop computer or fax machine
- Applying makeup

A motorist should never do any of these while driving. His/her full attention must be on the road at all times.

❖ TIRED DRIVER/HIGHWAY HYPNOSIS

A tired driver is a dangerous driver. A tired driver cannot drive well and his/her reaction time is reduced. The motorist may also get upset more easily or even fall asleep behind the wheel. A tired driver can be as dangerous as a drunk driver. Maggie's Law, which was enacted in June 2003, makes it illegal to knowingly drive a vehicle while impaired by lack of sleep. This law establishes driving while fatigued as recklessness under the vehicular homicide statute (N.J.S.A. 2C:11-5).

When a motorist has been behind the wheel for a long time, he/she may experience "highway hypnosis." This trance-like state may be avoided by not looking at any one thing for more than a few seconds. It is recommended that a motorist rest every two hours and/or share the driving with another licensed motorist.

▼ DROWSY DRIVING – WHO IS MOST AT RISK?

Motorists who are:

- Sleep deprived
- Driving long distances without rest breaks
- Driving through the night or at other times when they are normally asleep
- Taking medicine that increases sleepiness, or drinking alcohol
- Driving alone
- Driving on long, rural, boring roads
- Young people
- Shift workers
- Commercial drivers

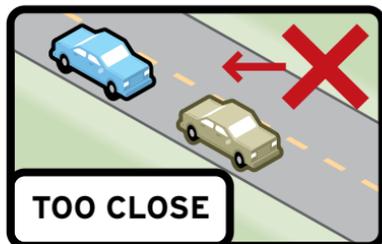
▼ COMMUNICATING AND DRIVING

Communicate with other motorists by all available means and signals. A motorist should always stay in the lane that shows where he/she intends to turn. Turn signals (hand signals) allow a motorist to tell other motorists what he/she is going to do. Another good method is catching other motorists' eyes. It may be necessary to tap the horn to warn other motorists. At night, a quick flip of the headlights from low to high and back to low might be helpful.

A motorist should always be patient in town or city traffic and try not to make quick turns or lane changes. Do not let rush-hour traffic become irritating. Be alert and drive defensively. Always use good judgment in stopping, starting and turning. Knowing all traffic rules, signs and signals is helpful. If a motorist must pull off the road, he/she should always turn on the vehicle's emergency flashers (hazard lights).

KEEP A SAFE DISTANCE/DO NOT TAILGATE

A motorist should always keep a safe distance from other vehicles on the road so that he/she has plenty of time to react to emergencies. Tailgating refers to following too closely behind a vehicle directly in front. This is a common cause of accidents. Tailgating can cause a series of rear-end collisions when many vehicles are too close together. There should be plenty of space between a motorist's vehicle and others on all sides. A motorist should stay in the middle of the lane and make sure there is enough room ahead to stop or pass safely.



ONE CAR LENGTH

Although there is no perfect rule for following distance, the rule of thumb most often used is to keep one car length back (about 20 feet) for each 10 miles per hour of speed. At high speeds or in bad weather, following distances should be increased.

THREE-SECONDS-PLUS RULE

Since most people have trouble judging distances, the three-seconds-plus rule to determine safe distance may be easier to use. It is useful at any speed.

- Choose some fixed object ahead of the vehicle in front. The object may be a sign or a tree. Make sure the object does not distract attention from driving.
- As the vehicle in front passes the object, begin counting seconds (one-thousand-one, one-thousand-two, one-thousand-three).
- If it takes at least three seconds before the vehicle passes the object, a motorist should have enough distance for a sudden stop.
- Practicing safe space management/following distance is the ability to stop a vehicle safely and smoothly in the event the vehicle in front stops.
- Stopping Distance = Perception Distance + Reaction Distance + Braking Distance.
- By keeping a foot near the brake, a motorist can reduce reaction distance.
- Time and distance relationships are designed for the best driving conditions.
- It should be noted that heavier vehicles may take longer to stop.

Try the rule while driving. It can help a motorist develop good judgment for proper following distances. During bad weather, the time interval should be increased to four or more seconds.

FOLLOWING DISTANCES

While keeping the proper following distance in traffic, the motorist should always know the condition of his/her vehicle's brakes. Test them often. Make sure of the distance it might take to stop. This is very important on wet roads and where there is snow or ice. A motorist should always increase following distance with poor road conditions.

MINIMUM SAFE FOLLOWING DISTANCE (in car lengths)

Road condition	20 mph	30 mph	40 mph	50 mph
Ideal	2 car lengths	3	4	5
Wet pavement	4 car lengths	6	8	10
Gravel	4 car lengths	6	8	10
Packed snow	6 car lengths	9	12	
Ice	12 car lengths	18		

CHANGING LANES AND PASSING

Using the proper lane is an important part of defensive driving. Do not straddle a lane. Be alert to traffic behind. When a lane change must be made, look at the rearview mirror. Glance behind to check blind spots. Always signal lane changes. Before passing a vehicle or changing lanes, keep the following points in mind:

- Only pass or change lanes when necessary.
- Only pass or change lanes if it can be completed without speeding.
- Keep a safe following distance; do not tailgate.
- Check traffic ahead and behind.
- Only pass when signs and pavement markings permit.
- Signal every lane change.
- Signal your return to the right lane.
- Return to the right lane when well ahead of the vehicle that was passed. (A good indication that it is safe to return to the right lane is when the vehicle that was passed is visible in the rearview mirror.)
- Cancel the turn signal.

PASSED BY ANOTHER VEHICLE

When a motorist is passed by another vehicle, he/she must be careful. Stay in the proper lane and slow down to make the pass easier for the other motorist. Return to normal speed after the passing vehicle is well ahead (N.J.S.A. 39:4-87).

ROAD CONDITIONS

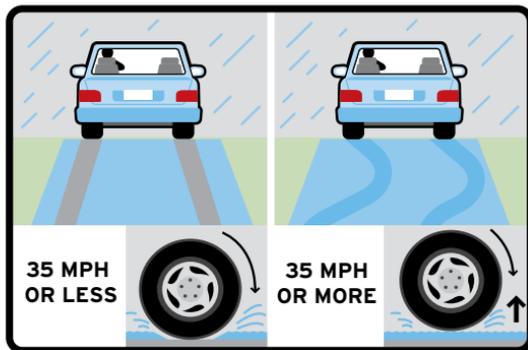
WET ROADS

Drive more slowly on wet roads. Stopping and turning should be completed with great care. The three-seconds-plus rule should be increased to four or more seconds. Quick turns or changes in speed may cause a vehicle to skid.

Road surfaces are the most slippery during the first few minutes of a rainfall. When driving through a water puddle, a motorist should test the brakes by pumping them. This will also help to dry the brakes. Speed should be decreased when passing through water puddles, especially those deeper than the tread of a tire.

HYDROPLANING

Wet road surfaces can cause tires to hydroplane, or ride up on a film of water, starting at about 35 mph, which could cause a motorist to lose control of his/her vehicle. Chances of hydroplaning increase as speeds increase. After 55 mph, tires may totally leave the road surface. If tires totally leave the road surface, braking is virtually impossible, and turning is not possible. A gust of wind, a change in road level or a slight turn can create a skid if a vehicle is hydroplaning. To avoid hydroplaning, do not drive on bald or badly worn tires, and slow down when heavy rain, standing water or slush is present. In a heavy rainstorm, try to drive on the highest point of the road. For example, use the center lane on a multiple lane highway, when available.



SNOW AND ICE

Winter driving has special dangers, including longer hours of darkness, fog, rain, snow, sleet and ice. Each of these increases the possibility for an accident. A safe motorist is prepared for these types of situations.

Before driving in cold weather, start the engine and let it warm up according to manufacturer directions. All snow and ice must be removed from the entire vehicle. New Jersey law states that a motorist is responsible for any ice that flies from his/her vehicle and causes death, injury or property damage (N.J.S.A. 39:4-77.1). Always make sure the vehicle has the proper type of windshield washing fluid.

In snow and ice conditions, a motorist should take precautions and get a feel for the road. Gently applying the brakes while driving slowly will allow a motorist to find out just how slippery the road is. This will also allow the motorist to judge how fast the vehicle can go and still stop safely. A vehicle will skid if a motorist:

- Accelerates too quickly.
- Turns too fast.
- Brakes improperly.

Motorists who have a vehicle with antilock brakes (ABS) should keep a foot on the brake pedal and not pump the brakes. Conventional disc and drum brakes require firm, steady pressure on the brake pedal. Hitting the brakes too hard may cause the wheels to lock. If the brakes do lock, release the brake pedal and then immediately reapply with slightly less pressure. This process should be repeated with less and less pressure on the brake pedal until the vehicle is under control. Snow tires help driving during the winter months by providing better traction for more controlled starting, steering and stopping. Snow tires do not provide good traction on ice. Tire chains are the best traction on ice and in hard-packed or deep snow. In New Jersey, motorists may use studded snow tires between November 15 and April 1 (N.J.S.A. 13:20-15.2g).

To start on snow and ice, keep the engine speed low. If the wheels spin, a lower gear should be used. When stuck, rock the vehicle back and forth by shifting between forward and reverse to escape.



Motorists are prohibited from allowing their motor vehicles to idle for more than three consecutive minutes. Among the exceptions for this prohibition include motor vehicles stopped in the line of traffic, motor vehicles being repaired, motor vehicles waiting to be inspected, emergency vehicles in emergency situations and buses while discharging or picking up passengers (N.J.A.C. 7:27-15.8, 7:27-14.3).

REDUCED VISIBILITY

Poor roadway or weather conditions require motorists to increase following distance because rough, wet or snow-covered roads may require more response time. A good rule on snow-covered roads is to maintain a following distance of six seconds or more.

Frost or ice: Always scrape and wipe a vehicle's windows before starting. Turn on the defroster. If the defroster does not work while driving in freezing rain or snow, stop the vehicle. Close the windows and let the heater warm up the windows.

Fog: Always slow down when driving in fog. Headlights should be kept on low beam and fog lights should be turned on, if the vehicle has them. Pavement markings and other vehicle lights can serve as a motorist's guide.

Sun glare: Sun visors should always be adjusted to shield a motorist's eyes without cutting off his/her view of the road. Hold the steering wheel firmly and slow down. Watch for lane markings.

In all cases, if visibility is greatly reduced, a motorist should stop alongside the road or on the shoulder, out of the way of traffic, and turn on emergency flashers.

NIGHT DRIVING

Nearly 90 percent of driving decisions are based upon what a motorist sees while driving. At night, a motorist's vision is reduced. To drive safely at night, slow down and drive within the range of the vehicle's headlights. A motorist should always be sure the vehicle can stop within the distance that he/she sees ahead. A motorist should always consider the following factors when driving at night:

- Speed
- Reaction distance (distance traveled before hitting the brake)
- Braking distance (distance needed to completely stop vehicle)

DRIVING AND STOPPING AT NIGHT

Speed	Reaction distance	Braking distance	Stopping distance
20 mph	44 ft	25 ft	69 ft
30 mph	66 ft	57 ft	123 ft
40 mph	88 ft	101 ft	189 ft
50 mph	110 ft	158 ft	268 ft
60 mph	132 ft	227 ft	359 ft
70 mph	154 ft	310 ft	464 ft

This table shows the distance the average motorist will need to stop while driving at a designated speed using low beams at night. Numbers are based on a motorist reaction time of 1.5 seconds. A vehicle travels 88 feet per second at 60 mph. Deceleration is 17.02 feet per second.

Other safety rules for night driving are:

- Drive with headlights on at dusk, night, dawn, on dark days and whenever weather conditions reduce visibility to less than 500 feet. State law requires the headlights to be on when windshield wipers are in use (N.J.S.A. 39:3-46).
- Drive more slowly than during daylight.
- Watch for road signs, slow-moving or unlit vehicles, bicycles, pedestrians and animals.
- Allow for more safety margins than you would during daylight.

DRIVING SITUATIONS

A motorist will come across a number of different driving situations that have their own unique safety concerns or requirements. A motorist must know how to safely navigate his/her vehicle in each of these situations.

CITY DRIVING

When traveling in a city, heavier traffic and more pedestrians require motorists to be very alert. In city traffic, a motorist should try to cooperate with other motorists. Drive more slowly and watch for the movements of others. Motorists must be more careful about pedestrians and less-visible vehicles, such as bicycles, mopeds, motorcycles, motorized wheelchairs and mobility-assistance vehicles. Pedestrians and individuals in wheelchairs or mobility-assistance vehicles always have the right-of-way in a crosswalk. Motorists must always yield to pedestrians in a crosswalk.

A motorist should look at least 12 seconds ahead. This means that he/she should be able to see an object far enough ahead so that it takes at least 12 seconds to get to it. While driving at 25 mph on a clear road in a city, a motorist should be able to see about a block ahead. When traffic is heavy, extra time to react is necessary, which means driving more slowly. By reducing speed, a motorist gains time.

On city streets, a motorist will pass through intersections very often. Many new motorists fail to see intersections. A motorist should always consider the following safety tips:

- If at the middle of a block, check intersections ahead for traffic controls.
- When approaching or nearing an intersection, reduce speed. Glance left and then right. Keep foot on the brake.
- When at a crosswalk, a vehicle should be at its lowest speed. A motorist must decide whether to stop or go across. Take quick glances around. If clear, proceed to cross.

Watch for uncontrolled intersections where there are no lights or signs. Do not think that a roadway is protected because it is wide, smooth or busy. If there are no traffic signals, there is no traffic control. Avoiding collisions is up to the motorist. Look. Listen. Think.

▼ HIGHWAY DRIVING

Traffic accidents and deaths can happen on highways when the weather is good and the roads are dry. Exceeding the posted speed limit or driving too fast for road conditions is one of the most prevalent factors contributing to traffic collisions.

Major highways are usually in good condition. They often have four or more lanes. Wide-open spaces often give a motorist the feeling that he/she can relax his/her attention. It is important to stay alert on highways. Some highways may not have traffic signs or signals at crossroads. This means a motorist must drive defensively and stay within the speed limit. Always be ready to react to the unexpected.

▼ HILLS, BRIDGES AND OTHER ROAD HAZARDS

A motorist should always be on the lookout for signs that warn of road hazards. These include hills, dips, narrow bridges, bumps and railroad tracks. Drive slowly in these areas. If a vehicle is moving too fast, the motorist may not be able to slow down in time. Speeding and applying the brakes firmly can cause a skid or a spin.

Motorists should be cautious when traveling in farm country or in open land where livestock or deer may cross the road. If a motorist encounters an animal, he/she should slow down until the animal has passed. Animals make unexpected moves, so a motorist must be alert.



CONSTRUCTION ZONES/WORK ZONES (N.J.S.A. 39:4-203.5)

Most motorists will encounter construction on roadways. In New Jersey, traffic fines are doubled for motor vehicle violations committed in the area of roadway construction zones. These work zones are identified by an advance warning sign or flashing lights on a vehicle up to one-half mile before the work area. Flaggers may control traffic and protect project personnel in the work area. Sometimes it is necessary to redirect traffic from its normal path around the work zone. Motorists may encounter a detour onto another roadway to bypass the work area or a diversion onto a temporary roadway, such as a median crossover or a lane shift. If traffic is permitted through or adjacent to the work area, it will be guided with temporary traffic control devices. At the end of the work area, there will be an End Road Work sign or the last temporary traffic control device, so motorists can resume normal driving. For illustrations of signs and barricades used in construction zones, see the Driver Safety Section at the end of this manual.

It is extremely important for motorists to remain alert when traveling through a work zone. Annually, there are nearly 800 fatal and over 37,000 serious injury crashes in work zones. In addition, congestion and delays may mount, causing the frustration level of motorists to rise. Motorists should keep the following basics in mind:

- **Stay alert:** Dedicate full attention to the roadway.
- **Pay close attention:** Signs and work zone flaggers save lives.
- **Turn on headlights:** Workers and other motorists must be able to see the vehicle.
- **Don't tailgate:** Unexpected stops or slowing may occur.
- **Don't speed:** Note the posted speed limits in and around the work zone.
- **Minimize distractions:** Avoid changing radio stations or talking on hands-free devices when traveling through a work zone.
- **Expect the unexpected:** Keep an eye out for workers and their equipment.
- **Be patient:** Remember that work-zone crew members are working to improve the ride for all motorists.

REACTING TO DRIVING PROBLEMS

A motorist should always be prepared for any problems that he/she may encounter while driving. Certain situations require the motorist to react immediately in order to avoid an accident.

IGNITION SYSTEM

Today's vehicles are equipped with ignition systems that, when used properly, will prevent the theft of an automobile and vehicle rollaway. An ignition system permits key removal only when the vehicle's transmission is in the Park position. Motorists in an emergency situation on the highway may attempt to turn off the vehicle while it is still in motion, believing they will bring the vehicle to a stop. The basic rule the motorist must follow when operating a vehicle with a steering wheel ignition system is to never turn the ignition to the lock position while the vehicle is in motion. The steering will lock as the vehicle turns, and the motorist will lose control of the vehicle.

SKIDS

Sudden turns, lane changes or hard braking can throw a vehicle into a skid. This often happens on wet or icy roads. A motorist should handle a skid in both front-wheel and rear-wheel drive vehicles in the same way. If the rear end of the vehicle starts to slide, a motorist should take his/her foot off the gas pedal. A vehicle may spin if the steering wheel is quickly turned away from the direction of the skid.

To avoid a spin, the motorist should turn in the direction the rear of the vehicle is skidding, without over steering. When skidding, a motorist should look in the direction that he/she wants to go. A motorist will be able to feel when the vehicle is back under control and should then straighten the wheels. During a side skid, avoid using the brakes.

▼ EMERGENCY STOPS

If an emergency highway stop is necessary, a motorist should always keep several basic points in mind. On a highway with paved shoulders, signal and turn onto the shoulder at or near traffic speed. Then begin to slow down. Where the shoulder is unpaved, signal a turn and slow down to a safe speed before turning off. Once the vehicle is pulled to the shoulder, turn on the parking lights or emergency warning lights.

Never block tail lights at night by standing or working behind the vehicle. Day or night, put a flare or other warning sign just behind the vehicle. Put another warning device at least 300 feet back (about 120 paces). Raise the hood. Tie a white handkerchief to the antenna or left door handle as a signal, if help is needed.

▼ RUNNING OFF THE PAVEMENT

If a vehicle's wheels drift onto the shoulder of the road, do not try to turn back onto the pavement right away. This might throw the vehicle off balance. Too often motorists panic and steer abruptly to return to the road, causing the vehicle to slingshot across the roadway or into traffic. Instead, a motorist should stay on the shoulder and ease up on the gas pedal. After the vehicle has slowed down to 25 mph or less, the motorist may turn back onto the road by turning the steering wheel one-quarter turn toward the roadway. This will allow tires to climb the pavement edge and get back onto the pavement.

If a vehicle runs off the pavement:

- Slow down.
- Regain control.
- Turn slowly onto the road.

▼ CAR FIRES

Most car fires are caused by short circuits in the electrical system. In case of fire, do not waste time. Get passengers out and away from the vehicle at once, and call for help. A motorist should never attempt to put out a fire.

▼ PLUNGING INTO WATER

Water causes more panic than any other emergency. Actual tests have resulted in a few tips. A vehicle with windows and doors closed will float for about three to ten minutes. Two major points in escape and self-rescue from a submerged vehicle are to wear a seat belt, which will increase the chances of surviving the initial impact of the water, and, while the vehicle is still floating on the surface, to escape through an open window. It is hard to open a door against water pressure, but a window can be rolled down easily. Power windows may short out, so try to open them at once. Glass in the side and rear windows can be broken but only with a heavy, hard object.

A front-engine vehicle will sink nose first. Some air may be pushed to the rear, near the roof. When the pressure inside and outside the vehicle is equal, it is easier to open a door. A motorist should try to escape through a door or window. Remember that three to five minutes gives plenty of time in an emergency. Wearing a seat belt is the best insurance against being knocked unconscious. Once out of the vehicle, a motorist may become disoriented underwater. Always remember to follow the air bubbles to reach the surface.

▼ STALLING ON RAILROAD TRACKS

If the vehicle has a standard shift, the motorist should try to move it by running the starter in low or second gear. With an automatic shift, the motorist will have to push the vehicle off the tracks. If the vehicle cannot be moved off the tracks, and a train is coming, the motorist should move as far away from the tracks as possible and call for help.

▼ VEHICLE FAILURE

No matter how well a vehicle is maintained, there is still a chance a motorist will experience vehicle problems. A motorist should always be prepared for any type of situation and never panic.

▼ BRAKE FAILURE

If a vehicle's conventional disc and drum brakes suddenly fail, a motorist should shift to a lower gear and pump the brake pedal fast and hard several times. This may build up enough brake pressure to stop the vehicle. If that does not work, the parking brake should be used while holding the brake release, so the motorist can let up if the rear wheels lock and the vehicle begins to skid. With the vehicle in low gear, the motorist should begin looking for a safe place to stop off the roadway and call for help.

▶ **TIRE BLOWOUT**

If a motorist experiences a flat tire or blowout, he/she should hold the steering wheel firmly and keep the vehicle straight while gradually slowing down. The motorist should remove his/her foot from the gas pedal but not use the brakes. The vehicle should coast to a stop on its own as the motorist pulls to a safe area off the roadway.

▶ **POWER STEERING FAILURE**

When an engine dies, a vehicle's power steering will fail. The motorist should keep a firm grip on the wheel because extra hand power will be needed to turn or keep control. The vehicle should be brought to a stop in a safe area off the roadway. The motorist may need to push very hard on power brakes that are not working.

▶ **HEADLIGHT FAILURE**

If headlights suddenly go out, a motorist should safely bring the vehicle to a stop in a safe area off the roadway. The headlight or dimmer switches may help the lights go on again. If this does not work, the motorist should put the parking lights, emergency flashers or turn signals on and call for help.

▶ **GAS PEDAL PROBLEMS**

If a gas pedal sticks, the motorist should keep his/her eyes on the road while quickly shifting to neutral. Steer the vehicle to a safe area off the roadway, turn the engine off and call for help.

▶ **HOOD LATCH FAILURE**

If the vehicle's hood suddenly flies up, the motorist should slow down immediately. He/she should try to look under the hood to see the road or look out of the side window around the hood. Using the center line or lane markings as a guide, the motorist should pull the vehicle to a safe area off the roadway as soon as possible.

▶ **WINDSHIELD WIPER FAILURE**

When windshield wipers stop suddenly during rain or snow, the motorist should slow down, pull to a safe area off the roadway and turn on emergency flashers. Call for help if necessary.

COLLISIONS (ACCIDENTS)

AVOIDING COLLISIONS

No matter how careful a motorist is, emergencies do arise. A motorist may not always be able to avoid a collision. This is why it is important to know how to safely handle any type of situation that may occur. Proper reaction could save the life of the motorist and his/her passengers or others involved. Above all, seat belts should always be worn while driving.

If a motorist sees that his/her vehicle may hit something, one of three things can be done: stop, turn or speed up.

Stop quickly: If the vehicle has conventional disc and drum brakes, the motorist should pump the brakes to gain better control in steering. The wheels will lock and cause skidding if a motorist brakes too hard and holds them down. If the vehicle has antilock brakes (ABS), they will adjust automatically if a wheel begins to lock. With this brake system, a motorist can put maximum pressure on the brakes and retain steering control without pumping the brakes.

Turn quickly: If a motorist cannot stop in time, he/she should turn away and drive off the road if necessary. If the motorist can keep from using the brakes while turning, this will lessen the chances of a skid. A motorist should not brake hard if turning onto a soft shoulder of a road. This could cause skidding or loss of control.

Speed up: Sometimes it is best or necessary to speed up to avoid a collision. This may happen when another vehicle is about to hit a motorist's vehicle from the side or from behind, and there is room to the front to get out of danger. A motorist should push the gas pedal to the floor. There may be only seconds to act, so a motorist must decide quickly. Once the danger has passed, the motorist should slow the vehicle's speed.

LAST-MINUTE CHOICES

A motorist should never panic, especially in the few seconds before a possible collision. There are some last-minute choices that he/she will have to make. A motorist should always be aware of what to do in an emergency situation. Reacting properly and quickly can avoid collisions or, at least, minimize damage.

If a collision looks possible, the motorist should turn away from oncoming traffic, even if it means leaving the road. Driving off the road, rather than skidding, gives the motorist more control over the vehicle. The motorist should choose to hit something that will give way (such as brush or shrubs) rather than something hard.

Choose to hit something moving in the same direction, rather than something that is not moving. Choose to hit something not moving, rather than something coming straight on. If hitting something is unavoidable, try to make it a glancing blow. A sideswipe, for example, will help slow the vehicle. Try to never hit anything head-on. For every inch that a motorist steers away from a collision between the center of the vehicle's front end and the center of the oncoming object, the energy of the collision will dissipate and reduce injury and damage.

▼ REAR COLLISION

If the vehicle is about to be hit from the rear, the motorist must be ready to apply the brakes to avoid being pushed into a vehicle ahead. The motorist should brace his/her body between the steering wheel and the seat back, pressing the back of his/her head firmly against the head rest (if vehicle has one).

▼ SIDE COLLISION

If the vehicle is about to be hit from the side, the motorist should keep a tight grip on the steering wheel. This may keep him/her from being thrown against the side of the vehicle. The motorist should be ready to turn fast, so that if the vehicle spins around, he/she can try to control the vehicle.

▼ HEAD-ON COLLISION

If the vehicle is about to be hit from the front, the motorist should use his/her arms and hands to protect his/her face if wearing a shoulder strap and the vehicle is equipped with air bags. If the vehicle is not equipped with a shoulder strap or air bags, the motorist should throw himself/herself across the seat to keep from hitting the steering wheel or windshield. Air bags will typically deploy in vehicles that have them.

▼ PARKED VEHICLE COLLISION

If a motorist hits a parked vehicle, the police must be notified. The driver should also try to find the owner of the vehicle.

WHAT TO DO IN CASE OF A COLLISION

If a motorist witnesses a collision or is involved in one, he/she should follow these tips in order to help protect everyone involved:

- Stop the vehicle.
- Remain calm.
- Assume the worst and get help (notify the police; call an ambulance).
- Wait at the scene, but try not to block traffic.
- Ask for assistance from passing motorists, bikers or joggers, if needed.
- Depending on the location of the accident – local road, highway or in a busy city intersection—warn oncoming traffic.

REPORTING ACCIDENTS (N.J.S.A. 39:4-130, 39:4-131)

New Jersey law requires motorists to notify the police of accidents where there is injury, death, or vehicle or property damage. If someone has been killed, do not move the body or permit anyone to move the body until the police or ambulance arrives.

If the motorist is involved in the accident, he/she can help the police by answering as many questions as possible and by giving them as many facts about the accident as possible. When damage to property is more than \$500 or there is personal injury, a motorist must:

- Send a written report to the MVC within 10 days if no police report is filed. A written report is not required if a report is filed by police. A motorist can get a copy of the report form from the police.
- Notify his/her insurance company at once, giving complete information about the accident.
- If the motorist is shaken up, he/she should see a doctor as soon as possible.

