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From 2005 to 2008 the world saw a tenfold increase in text traffic. For better or worse, texting is part of our language and our lives.

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If your vehicle fails or a tire goes flat, what are your safe options? Pull over? Drive on?

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It's all about driving defensively - in other words watching out for other drivers.

Environment: 8 Tips You Can Take to the Tank.

Take these tips to heart, make them habits, and you will quickly see your fuel economy improve by 10 percent or more.

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Family & Passengers

Small Children, Big Distraction

Being a parent while you're driving can be downright scary. Your parental instinct is to take care of problems right now, but that instinct can create a dangerous scenario on the road!

You're driving down the road when your two-year-old's shoe flies out of the back seat, whizzes past your head, and smacks the windshield... or maybe a small-scale war breaks out in the back seat... or possibly you just hear a shriek behind you: is it pain or just the uncontrollable joy of being alive?

Being a parent while you're driving can be downright scary. Your parental instinct is to take care of problems right now, but that instinct can create a dangerous scenario on the road. Can you really do a thorough job of checking out what's happening in the back seat and keep your eyes on the road at the same time? No.

There's definitely a safer way:

- If you're traveling with another adult, one of you is the driver, the other is the care giver and disciplinarian for the kids.
- If there's no other adult in the car and a child needs your attention, stay calm (that's the hard part) and get off the road to a safe place before turning your full attention to your child.
- As soon as they're old enough to understand, set ground rules for children: No yelling, no throwing, no unbuckling themselves in the car.
- Keep potential missiles out of the back seat, including sharp, heavy or pointed objects or toys and, possibly, your two-year-old's shoes.

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Safety Fact

There were about 800 million passenger vehicles and light trucks in the world in 2007. If drivers took steps so that each of those vehicles saved just one gallon of fuel a month over the next year, we could keep 91 million tons of carbon dioxide (the most common greenhouse gas) out of the Earth's atmosphere.



Personal Matters

Texting Our Way into Trouble

From 2005 to 2008 the world saw a tenfold increase in text traffic. For better or worse, texting is part of our language and our lives.

Every day, we all see people texting as they walk, eat, bike and drive. If we watch texters long enough, we also see them bump into or trip over all kinds of things in their path. The problem has grown as quickly as texting itself. Although many studies the hazards of texting are now getting underway, full data are not yet available. But here's what we know so far.

Emergency rooms are reporting that increasing numbers of people are being seriously injured or even killed while texting. Young people in particular-but certainly not exclusively-are either colliding with others or tripping over their own feet and falling on their faces while texting. Facial and eye injuries seem especially prominent, but all kinds of texting-related injuries are on the rise, with the most serious and even fatal injuries occurring when texters collide with cyclists, rollerbladers and motorists.



Just how much does texting affect a driver?

Recent research in the United Kingdom used a driving simulator to show the effects of texting on the driving skills of 17- to 24-year-old motorists. Many areas of driving performance were affected. In particular:

- Texters' reaction times deteriorated by more than 35%. People who were intoxicated performed better (12%).
- Steering control was 91% worse, causing drivers to drift out of their lanes more frequently.
- The ability to maintain a safe following distance decreased significantly.

The American College of Emergency Physicians suggests that texters follow a few essential rules for drivers:

- Never text while operating a motor vehicle.
- Ignore incoming calls or messages until you have reached your destination.
- Or, simply turn off your phone before you begin to drive.

And since the problem extends beyond driving, they have a couple of other recommendations:

- Don't text or use a cell phone while doing physical activities that require sustained attention.
- Don't text in any situation where excessive inattention may compromise your safety or someone else's. (Examples: on jogging paths, busy sidewalks or intersections, or anyplace where your personal security could be threatened).

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Safety Fact

Everybody needs to buckle up. When the driver is belted, 92% of children under 8 are restrained (belted and in child seats). When the driver is not belted, only 61% of children are restrained. Get in the habit, for everyone's sake.



Vehicle Safety

The Side of the Road is a Last Resort

If your vehicle fails or a tire goes flat, what are your safe options? Pull over? Drive on? The answers to these questions will help you make safe choices when you're faced with roadside emergencies. Just keep in mind: stopping on the side of the road is often not the best option.

If the Emergency is a Flat Tire

- Turn on your emergency flashers, pull as far as possible to the right side of the roadway (if there's a shoulder, use it), and keep driving-slowly-until you find an exit or a safe stopping place. It is common to be able to drive about 90 meters or more (about 100 yards) on a flat tire without causing damage.

For Non-Emergency Stops (fatigue, changing drivers, making a phone call)

- Do not stop on the side of the road. Besides being unsafe, in many places it is illegal to stop on the shoulder for non-emergencies. Instead, find a well-lighted parking lot with many people around, or another place where you can park securely.

If You Have No Choice But to Stop (stalled vehicle, etc.)

- Turn on your emergency flashers.
- Pull off the road as far as possible.
- If there is a shoulder, pull to its far right side.
- Try to avoid stopping on a curve or the down side of a hill.
- Call for roadside assistance or call the police.

Stay in Your Vehicle

- Unless you have a compelling reason to get out of your vehicle, stay in it. Sit in the passenger's seat with your seat belt fastened while you wait for help.
- If you must get out of the vehicle, exit on the passenger's side and use extreme caution if you need to walk near the roadway.

Your Personal Safety

- Do not get out and raise the hood of the vehicle. This is a clear sign to criminals that your vehicle is completely disabled.
- If someone stops to help, roll your window down just enough to speak to the person but not enough that someone can get a hand through the opening.
- If you have no phone, you can ask your "helper" to call the police or roadside assistance for you, unless you feel suspicious of the person. In that case, tell your helper that you've placed a call and police are now on the way.

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Recalls: Stay informed!!

With all of the different types of vehicles on the road today and more sophisticated technology being used in these vehicles; recalls for safety, maintenance and other issues happen often. Make sure that you check with your government motor vehicle safety agencies, vehicle manufacturer and insurance companies.

Each one of these offer free services where you can register your vehicle information and join a notification list for recalls.

Make it a priority and register today!



Streets & Sidewalks

Watching Out for the Other Driver

The Flash on this page was designed for company employees who have received a lot of driver training via our SAFE Fleet program. But anyone can benefit from the tips in the Flash because they're all about driving defensively - in other words watching out for other drivers.

Safety Fact

Experts estimate that 25% of all collisions occur at intersections within two seconds after a light turns green.



Focus on the Road

This means reducing your distractions as you drive. Please see the video for more information on these topics. Also, please answer our poll questions tell what activities you think are most distracting.

Scan Constantly

This helps you keep an eye on other drivers' movements so that you can adjust to them safely. Scan a full circle around your vehicle about every 4 to 8 seconds. And don't stop scanning when you're sitting in traffic.

Keep a Safe Following Distance

When the vehicle ahead of you passes a landmark such as a lamppost or a sign, you should be able to count off two full seconds before you pass the same landmark. If you get there before you count off two seconds, you're too close to the car ahead of you. At night or in bad weather, you need to at least double your following distance.

Wait 2 Seconds When the Light Turns Green

If you're first in line at a traffic light when it turns green, wait at least two seconds before you move into the intersection. This gives you a chance to watch the intersection and give any driver who runs a red light a chance to clear out of your path.

Back Slowly

Given that we only spend about one percent of our drive time in reverse, a comparatively large number of collisions

occur while backing. Anytime you back, move slowly and scan constantly as you back, and back no farther than is necessary.

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Environment

8 Tips You Can Take to the Tank

Take these tips to heart, make them habits, and you will quickly see your fuel economy improve by 10 percent or more. And of course, everything you do to reduce fuel costs also helps the effort to protect the environment for generations that are just now getting their lives underway. Those with an asterisk next to them will also help lower your collision risks.

1. Start Slowly, Stop Slowly *

Jackrabbit starts and other forms of rapid acceleration use 40 percent more fuel and increase toxic emissions by 400 percent versus more gradual acceleration. Slamming on the brakes also burns fuel faster. Anticipate your stops so that you can coast or brake more gradually. And if you know you've got the jackrabbit habit, work on accelerating more gradually when it's your turn to go.

2. Know Your Limits *

Keep an eye on your speed. Excess speed wastes fuel. It also raises your collision risk. And if you do have a collision, the faster you're moving the more severe the collision will be. So you've got all of that going against you, and speeding doesn't even save significant amounts of time.

3. Cruise Wisely

If your vehicle has cruise control, use it on flat roadways, where it will definitely help to maintain a steady pace and maximize fuel economy. But in hilly areas shut off the cruise control as it can cause rapid acceleration, which means more fuel is used.

4. Plan Ahead

Consume less fuel by combining multiple small errands into one longer trip. Plan your route so that it leads from one stop to another as logically as possible, without crisscrossing your own path. Your fuel consumption will go down and so will your stress level.

5. Warm ups Are For Coffee

Idling and long warm-ups can add as much as 50 percent to your fuel costs. Modern vehicles do not need warm-ups. If it's truly frigid outside and you just can't resist, limit the warm-up to 30 seconds.

6. Stick to the Schedule *

Simply changing your oil and air filter on schedule can increase your fuel efficiency up to 12 percent. Properly aligned tires can increase fuel efficiency by 4 percent.

7. Check Your Pressure *

If you visited this site last quarter, you know that under-inflated tires cut into your fuel economy, reduce the life of your tires, and seriously affect your ability to steer and brake effectively, especially in an emergency. Check and adjust your tire pressure monthly.

8. Keep Your Cool



Safety Fact

If you're standing beside a roadway where traffic is moving 80 km/h (50 mph), cars are passing you at 22 meters per second (73 feet). Passing drivers have little time to see you, recognize your situation, and move to avoid hitting you.

Using the air conditioner can cause a 20 percent dip in fuel economy. On the other hand, keeping your windows open at higher speeds cuts down on vehicle aerodynamics. For better fuel economy, compromise: Turn on the AC at high speeds, but turn it off and roll down the window at slower speeds.

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