

Drive
SAFE

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SUMMER DRIVING

The summer months see an increase in traffic activity with vacation road trips and weekend trips to the lake. In addition to the basics of safe driving (always wearing seat belts, driving alert and sober, and at safe and legal speeds) summer auto safety has its own unique concerns:

- "Summerize" your vehicle. There are a number of things you can do to keep your car comfortable in hot weather. Change your oil at recommended intervals. Make sure coolant and fluids are filled to appropriate levels. Examine hoses and belts and replace any that may have cracked during the colder weather. Have air conditioning serviced by a certified specialist. Replace wiper blades if necessary; blades in poor condition can have an adverse effect on visibility. Keep tires properly inflated. This not only helps fuel efficiency, but also helps to avoid damage to tires. Make sure your spare tire is in good shape.
- Always carry a roadside emergency and first aid kit. A cell phone can be a lifesaver in an emergency. If you need to make a call, find a safe place and pull over.
- Wear safety belts. Safety belts reduce the risk of fatalities to front seat passengers by 45 percent according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. The risk of injury is reduced 50 percent.
 - Belts prevent passengers from being ejected from the car (most passengers who are ejected from cars die). Safety belts also protect passengers from being thrown around inside the car.
- Minnesota's seat belt law is a primary offense, meaning drivers and passengers in all seating positions must be buckled up or in the correct child restraint.
- Keep children safe. The back seat is the safest place for children to ride, and all children must be restrained properly for their size and age. Under Minnesota law, a child cannot use a seat belt alone until they are age 8, or 4 feet 9 inches tall.
- In bad weather, turn your headlights on. Minnesota law requires that headlights must be on whenever there is precipitation and whenever your visibility is reduced to 500 feet or less.
- Follow the three-second rule. Don't tailgate — you won't have enough time to stop in an emergency. In good weather, allow three seconds of following time behind the car in front of you. In adverse weather, add one second for each condition (fog, rain, snow, etc.). If someone is tailgating you, get out of the way and let them pass.
- Summer in Minnesota means road construction. Be alert to road conditions and the added activity of workers and machines. Fines for speed violations double in work zones.
- Don't leave children (or pets) alone in vehicles, even to run a quick errand. Even in 70 degree weather, car interior temperatures can quickly reach dangerous levels causing devastating injury, permanent brain damage or death.
- Don't drive if you're sleepy. Driving while drowsy can be as deadly as drinking and



MINNESOTA SAFETY COUNCIL

Making Minnesota a Safer Place to Live
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driving. Caffeine and other stimulants are no substitutes for sleep: their effects wear off rapidly. If driving long distances, plan frequent breaks — walk stretch, or even take a nap. If you have passengers, share the driving.

- Relax and enjoy the ride. Don't let anger at other drivers interfere with your good judgment. If another driver is driving aggressively, put as much space between your vehicle and theirs as possible.
 - Bring snacks, music and games to keep children busy so they don't break your concentration.
 - Make frequent stops to freshen up, walk around, relieve the tedium and, if possible, change drivers. It's better to get there a little later than to be stressed or involved in a crash.
- With summer weather and later daylight hours comes an increase in outdoor recreational activity. Teach children to never play around or in vehicles. Lock your vehicle and keep keys out of kids' reach. Always remember to take a quick walk around your vehicle before backing up. And be aware of additional bicyclists sharing the road. Take extra care when entering and exiting driveways and alleys and be especially alert in residential neighborhoods and downtown areas.

Acknowledgments:

[National Safety Council](#)

Minnesota Department of Public Safety

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration



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