



Driving Safety

Distracted Driving

Driving safety involves a comprehensive set of standards that applies at all times for all drivers sharing the road. It is a privilege and a responsibility to have a driver's license.

That's why distracted driving has come to be the focus of many safety organizations across the country.

Distracted driving is a top safety concern, and it is caused by participating in a variety of activities that can draw your focus from the road. Even a simple action such as sending a quick text to a friend or family member can divert your attention long enough to put you or your passengers in serious danger.

COMMON DISTRACTING ACTIVITIES

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 3,179 people were killed and 431,000 were injured in motor vehicles involving distracted drivers in 2014. Here are the most common distracted-driving activities, according to the NHTSA:

- Texting
- Using a cell phone and smartphone
- Eating and drinking
- Talking to passengers
- Grooming
- Reading, including maps
- Using a navigation system
- Watching a video
- Adjusting a radio, CD player or MP3 player

MOST DANGEROUS ACTIVITY

Due to certain factors, some activities pose the greatest risks. Texting is a modern-day safety dilemma, and because it is a multi-dimensional activity, it is now considered the most dangerous by many in the transportation safety industry.

Sending an average text takes a driver only five seconds,

but your car can still travel a considerable distance during that timespan. The NHTSA reports that teen drivers — who also are the most tech-savvy drivers on the road — are the most distracted drivers.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

The statistics related to distracted driving are startling.



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Many drivers, innocent passengers and even pedestrians are impacted if you take your eyes off the road. Some victims have to live with permanent injuries. Drivers are responsible for not only their lives but the lives of every passenger, as well as by-standers.

Wondering how you can help keep our roads a safer place? Education is the most

effective tool in persuading the public to avoid these activities and make safe driving a priority. Contact your local safety organization today to find out if there are volunteering opportunities at local events or schools. Share this article with others. Do whatever you can to spread the word on distracted driving and its negative impact on the roads we all share.

Stop Aggressive Driving

Our culture is fast paced, with deadlines and packed schedules, so tempers can run high and patience low on the road. This can result in aggressive driving – a situation that is dangerous for all involved.

According to the Governors Highway Safety Association, nearly 90 percent of drivers view aggressive driving as a very serious or somewhat serious threat to their own safety.

So how can we deal with aggressive drivers on the road? How do we tone down our own behavior if we are sometimes prone to partake in aggressive driving? Our tips below will help keep you safe on the road, even in the face of one of the most dangerous issues of the transportation industry.

ANGER BEHIND THE WHEEL

Aggressive behavior is defined and penalized differently per state. The term covers a range of unsafe driver behaviors. Generally, a driver must exhibit more than one traffic violation to qualify as being aggressive.

These drivers have let their emotions take the lead and thrown out the rules of the road. This threatens the safety of all motorists, bicyclists and pedestrians on the roadway.

Violating any combination of these behaviors constitutes aggressive driving according to the GHSA:

- Speeding
- Red light running

- Failure to yield
- Following too closely
- Improper passing
- Unsafe lane change
- Overtaking and passing another vehicle
- Violating traffic land markings

- Impeding traffic flows
- Reckless driving
- Unnecessary sounding of the horn or flashing lights

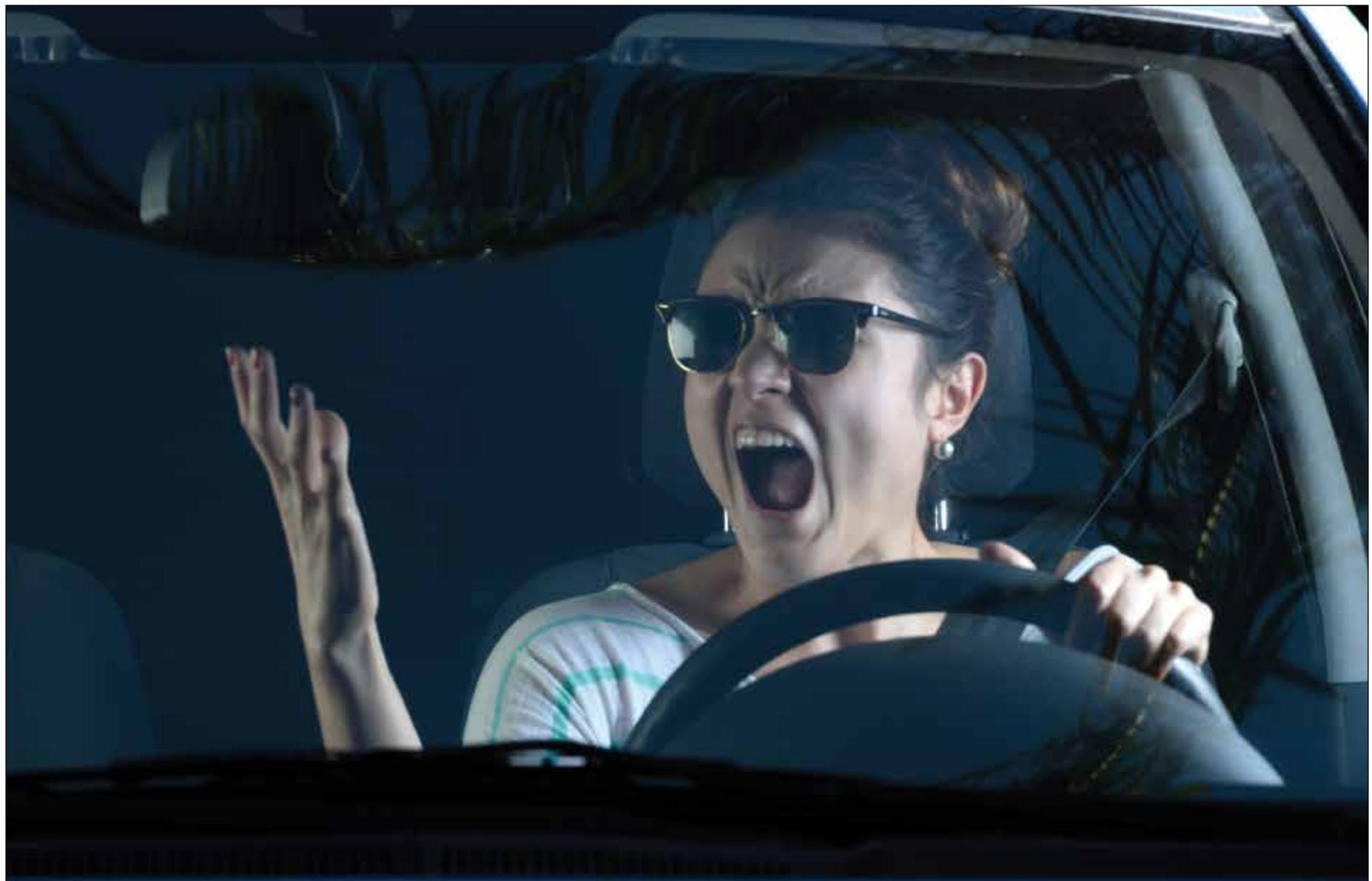
STATISTICS DON'T LIE

If you've witnessed any of the above actions, you under-

stand how dangerous they can be to other drivers on the road. One of the main things you can do involves talking with those in your network about aggressive driving, being sure to share with them the negative impact it can

have on their lives.

Share statistics that may open their eyes. A GHSA report found 9,262 people died in speeding-related crashes in 2014. This accounted for 28 percent of all fatalities.



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Educating Teen Drivers

Teen drivers are inexperienced and more prone to risky behaviors and safety violations that can lead to accidents, according to several transportation safety organizations.

Laws along with household rules are the best way to decrease risks, because they hold teens accountable for risky behaviors that may put themselves and others in danger.

INEXPERIENCE

The main issue that can impact a teen's driving skill is inexperience, which according to the National Safety Council, tops the list of reasons why nearly half of all teens will be involved in a car crash before graduating from high school.

Developing driving skills takes a lot of practice. It requires a complex and coordinated gathering of information and timely motor responses.

Teens struggle with tasks such as judging gaps in traffic and tend to drive too fast for conditions. All of these behaviors can be corrected with experience but, in the meantime, need to be considered when sharing the roads with teens.

SETTING RULES FOR DISTRACTIONS

It doesn't help that teenagers also are the most distracted drivers on the road, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety



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Administration. Safe driving requires complete concentration, but there are many activities that divert a driver's attention.

Common sense laws such as bans on texting and cell phone use, as well as parental guidance, are necessary to

keep teen drivers safer. Household rules are the groundwork for concerned parents. With its "5 to Drive" initiative, NHTSA reminds parents to set five crucial rules before teens hit the road:

- No cell phones while driv-

ing;

- No extra passengers;
- No speeding;
- No alcohol; and
- No driving or riding without a seat belt.

Additionally, teens should stay off the roads at night, if at all possible. Teenagers look

forward to getting their driver's license — a real rite of passage. The collective goal of society should be to decrease their risks so that they will have a bright future full of ample opportunities to hone and perfect their driving skills.

Plan a Safe Road Trip

Road trips are a great way to relax, experience adventure and see the landscape, but there are some practical matters to consider to ensure the safety of themselves and their passengers.

VEHICLE SAFETY

The vehicle is the star of a road trip. If it breaks down, the adventure is probably over and you can be looking at expensive repairs to go along with a shortened vacation.

A good rule of thumb is to keep regularly scheduled car maintenance up to date. There are never any guarantees, but making a pre-trip appointment with your mechanic to get an oil change, tire rotation and inspection of other vital areas is a good decision. Something as simple as worn out windshield wipers can turn serious in inclement weather.

Any strange vibrations or sounds, oil leaks or alignment issues should be addressed before starting your trip. Check all lights and turn signals. The heater or air conditioning should be in working order.

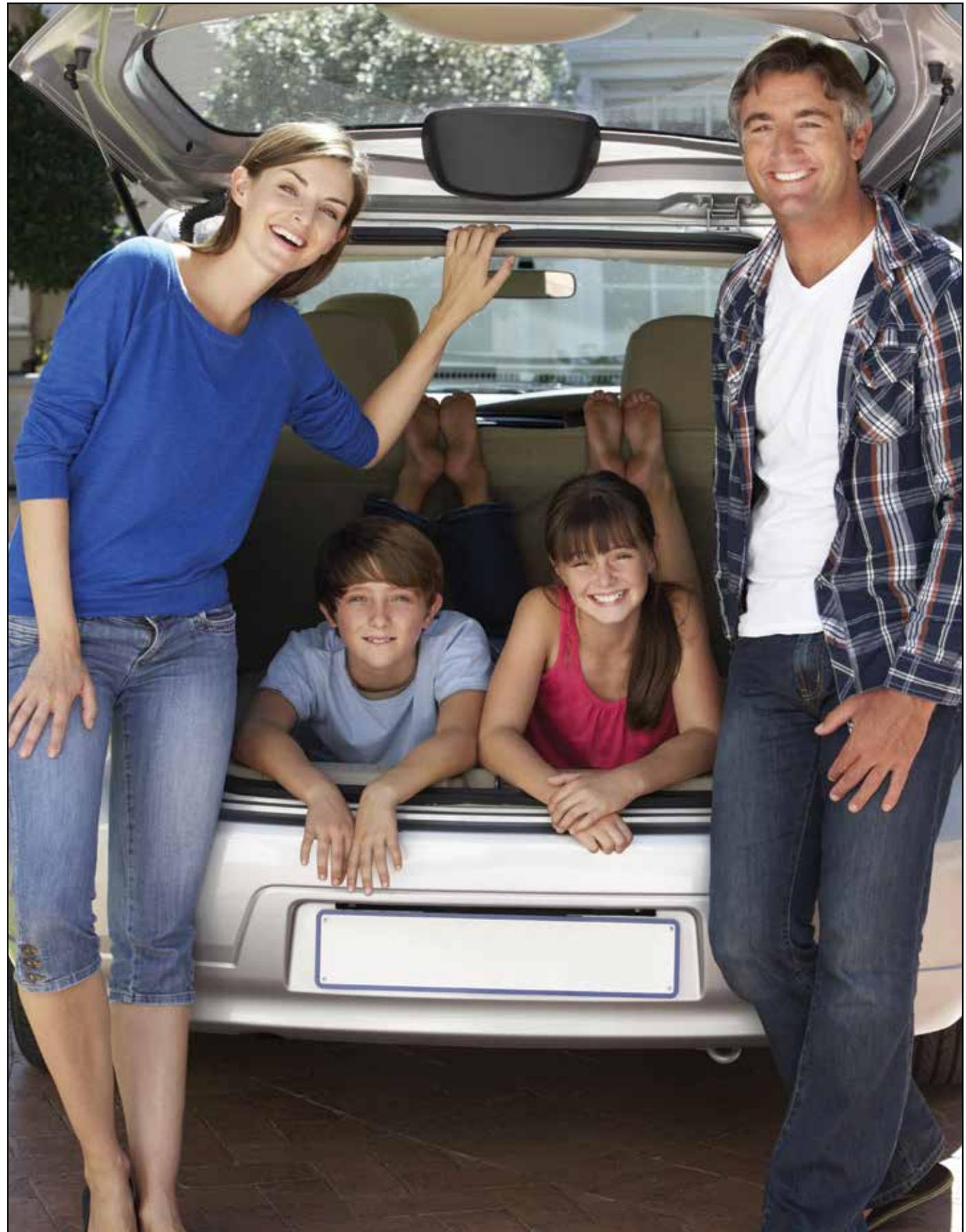
Always have the vehicle's owner's manual handy for unexpected down-the-road problems. At all times, a driver's car or trunk should contain a jack, spare tire, first aid and emergency kits.

DIRECTIONS

On a road trip, it is a good idea to stick to the map, especially in an unknown location. Having good directions also can contribute to time and gas efficiency.

A global positioning system is a wise investment ahead of a road trip. It shows turn-by-turn directions to help you reach your desired destination. Road conditions, traffic and ongoing construction, combined or on their own, can cause stress on a road trip. Many GPS devices are equipped with live traffic feeds. In states that use the 511 traffic system, drivers can be guided through upcoming road issues including road closures, highway conditions, ride-sharing details, accidents or detours.

No matter how you decide to keep safe on your road trip, it's important that you remember to balance safety and fun along the way.



Watch Out for Pedestrians

Driving safely includes a careful awareness of pedestrians nearby. Defensive driving helps, because sometimes, it is the pedestrian's behavior that causes a dangerous situation.

STATISTICS

Studies confirm that there are many tragedies involving drivers accidentally hitting pedestrians. In 2013, 4,735 pedestrians were killed in traffic crashes in the United States according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. This does not take into account those who were only injured.

Additionally, more than 150,000 pedestrians were treated in emergency departments for non-fatal crash-related injuries in 2013, according to the NHTSA. Pedestrians proved to be 1.5 times more likely than passenger vehicle occupants to be killed in a car crash on each trip.

BE ON THE DEFENSIVE

Many factors can add to the risk of pedestrians being struck by a vehicle. Alcohol use is a contributing factor to driver-pedestrian accidents. This applies whether it is the driver or the pedestrian under the influence.

Speeding also can contribute. The faster a vehicle is moving, the more likely a pedestrian will be hit and the worse the injury.

There are some locations and times when the risk of pedestrian-involved accidents is higher, including nighttime



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in urban, non-intersection areas. There are more people out and about in cities, boosting the need for drivers and pedestrians to remain vigilant of their surroundings.

SAFETY TIPS

Here are a few safety tips

from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on staying safe as a pedestrian:

- Whenever possible, cross the street at a designated crosswalk or intersection;
- Increase your visibility at night by carrying a flashlight and wearing retro-reflective

clothing;

- Walk on the sidewalk if available. If not, choose to walk on the shoulder and face traffic; and
- Avoid distractions such as electronic devices that require your attention while walking.

According to the CDC, statistics confirm some pedestrians are more vulnerable to being hit by a vehicle. These include the elderly and children, so watch out for these people and their safety in driving or walking on the roads and streets around you.

Wet Weather Driving

Most drivers are aware that driving in the rain is more dangerous than dry conditions, but we have to adjust our driving habits. According to AAA, wet pavement contributes to nearly 1.2 million crashes each year.

Rainy conditions add risks to driving in general, and extra caution should be taken in vehicle maintenance and driver compensation.

MAINTENANCE

When it's wet outside, the part of your vehicle that enable the driver to see and be seen become even more critical. Your windshield wipers should be in good shape so that in a downpour, you can see the road and other vehicles. Likewise, properly working headlights, taillights, brake lights and turn signals allow other drivers to see you. Turn on your headlights for maximum visibility.

When it comes to your tires, proper tread depth and inflation will ensure good traction on wet roadways. It is important to check them regularly, especially as wet weather is forecasted more regularly in your area.

DRIVER COMPENSATION

Most modern cars feature cruise control, yet this feature hampers your safety when it's raining. Cruise control can increase the chances of losing control of your vehicle, so avoid using it when wet roads are an issue.

Full concentration is required with no distractions while driving in general, but especially in wet-weather conditions. That's why slowing down is so critical to reducing a car's chance of hydroplaning — the action of your tires rising up on a film of water.

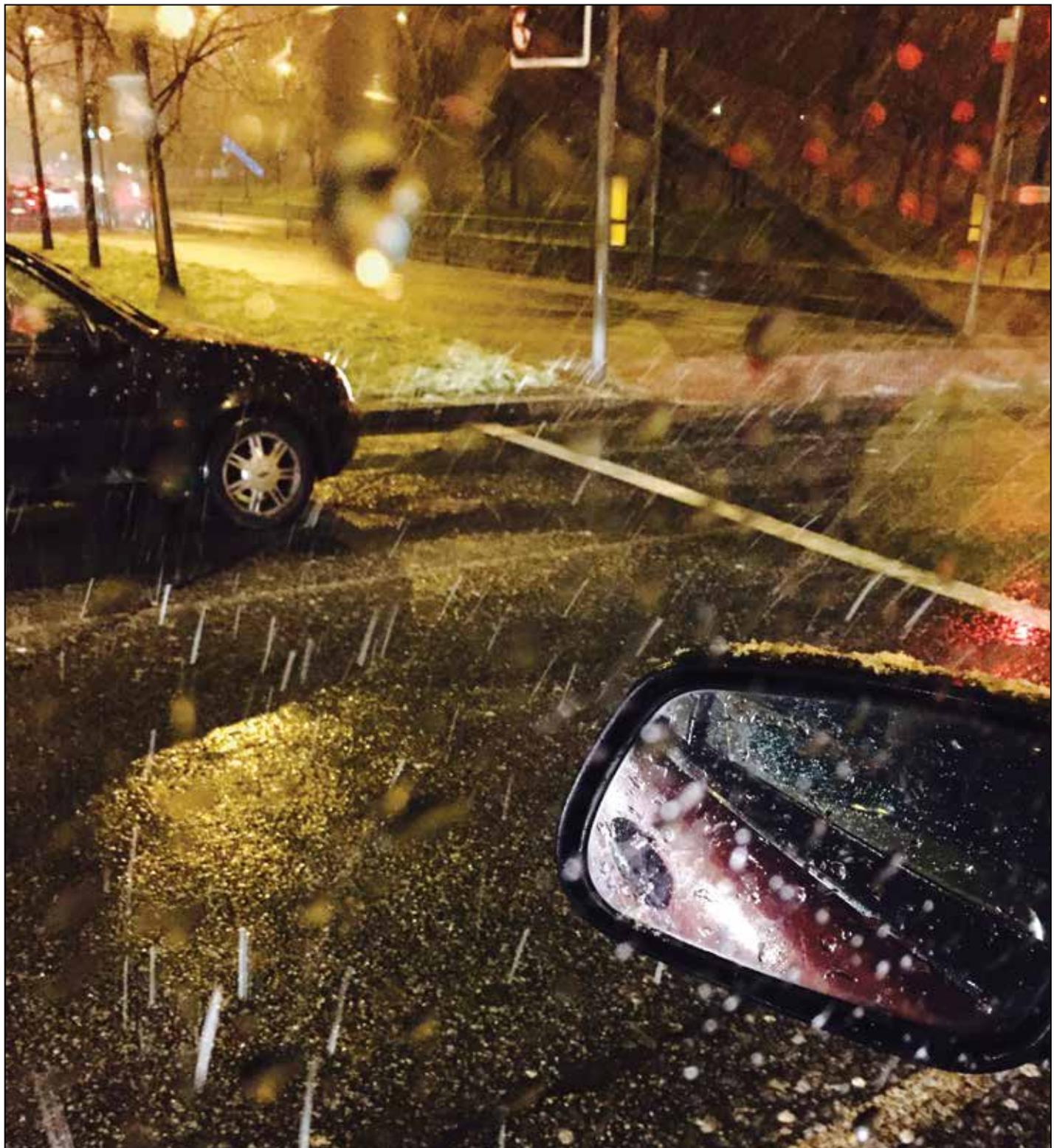
AVOID HARD BRAKING

Always avoid hard braking or turning sharply, and drive in the tracks of the vehicle ahead of you when dealing with a rain-soaked road. Allow extra stopping distance between cars by increasing the following distance and slowing down earlier to stop for intersections, turns and other traffic.

AAA advises drivers to brake, turn and then accelerate when driving in wet driving conditions. Skids can happen even to the most experienced drivers. Dealing with skids is simple, and drivers should follow these AAA recommendations.

- Continue to look and steer in the direction in which the driver wants the car to go; and

- Avoid slamming on the brakes as this will further upset the vehicle's balance and make it harder to control.



Driving on Medication

Safe driving requires alert drivers, so be careful of medications that could dull your senses and compromise your coordination.

Most medications do not limit your driving ability, but the Food and Drug Administration advises that you make sure you understand any possible side effects of your medication before you get behind the wheel.

REACTIONS

Some prescription and over-the-counter medicines can cause reactions that may make it unsafe to drive. According to FDA, these reactions may include:

- Sleepiness and drowsiness
- Blurred vision
- Dizziness
- Slowed movement
- Fainting
- Inability to focus or pay attention
- Nausea
- Excitability

These reactions can differ between people, and some do not experience them at all. In some states, driving while on medications can be against the law, just as it is illegal to drive while drunk. Drivers should never combine medication and alcohol while driving.

Knowing how medications alone or together can personally affect your ability to drive is a decision that will contribute to the safety of you, your passengers and others on the road.

UNSAFE MEDICATION

There are some prescription and OTC medications known to pose dangers while driving.

According to the FDA, they are prescription drugs for anxiety, some anti-depressants, products containing codeine, some cold remedies and allergy products, tranquilizers, sleeping pills, pain relievers, diet pills and other medications with stimulants.

DRIVING CHOICES

Everyone has to make decisions about whether they should drive or not based on their doctor's advice and their personal response to medication. You should always meet with your physician to discuss your ability to safely operate a motor vehicle.

If your decision is to drive, the FDA offers these recommendations:

- Don't stop using your medicine unless your doctor tells you to, and always take medications at prescribed levels and dosages;
- Talk to your health care professionals about side effects. Doctors and pharmacists can tell you about known side effects of medications, including those that interfere with driving; and
- Inform health care professionals about all the products you are taking, including prescription, OTC and herbal products. Also, let them know about any reactions you may experience.

Whether driving or a passenger, carry a list of all medications currently prescribed, including product names and dosages for emergency purposes. Following these tips will help keep our roads and streets a little safer.

