



# Alexander County Defensive Driving Training

*Daniel Fox*  
*Emergency Management Coordinator*



# Goals

---

- The goal of this program is to fulfill Alexander County's Motor Vehicle Policy Training Requirements.
- We hope the information contained will help reduce motor vehicle collisions and/or injuries, and help control losses to the County.
- Thank you for participating.



# Objectives

---

- Understand Alexander County's Motor Vehicle Policy
- Review North Carolina driving laws
- Reinforce safe driving habits for all employees
- Address emergency vehicle considerations



# Significance of Policies

---

- All personnel understand what is expected or required
- Intended compliance with all necessary requirements is identified
- Pre-planned and agreed upon actions
- Resource documents upon which to base training
- Required anticipated action



# Policy Subject Areas

---

- Maintenance
- Driver Selection
- Vehicle Use
- General Safety Rules
- Accident Reporting
- Training Guidelines
- Fuel Conservation and Record Keeping
- Discipline and Penalties



# Policy Overview

---

- Purpose: Ensure safe operation of County vehicles
- Risks: Motor vehicle accidents cause injuries and property damage
- Key Principles:
  - Senior management commitment and employee involvement
  - Vehicle selection, maintenance, and inspection
  - Driver selection procedures
  - Driver training and communication
  - Safe driving habits





# Maintenance

---

- Vehicles must follow the manufacturer's maintenance schedule.
- Unsafe vehicles must not be operated.
- Responsibilities:
  - Assigned vehicles: The employee is responsible for proper checks and maintenance of their assigned vehicles.
  - The Safety Coordinator should be coordinated with to schedule maintenance with the county garage.
- Garage maintains maintenance and repair records.



# Driver Selection

---

- Only authorized employees may operate County vehicles.
- Family members/non-employees prohibited (except first responders)
- Driver license requirements:
  - Valid license required; expired/revoked licenses result in disciplinary action
  - Safety Coordinator reviews and photocopies licenses
- Driving record checks:
  - No new hires with poor driving records (e.g., DWI, reckless driving, multiple violations/accidents)
- Criminal background checks required





# Vehicle Use

---

- Follow all traffic laws and regulations.
- Seat belts are mandatory (exceptions for EMS during patient care).
- Department Heads maintain vehicle documentation:
  - Accident report forms
  - Mileage logs
  - Insurance card, registration, and maintenance checklist
- Driving is prohibited after alcohol and/or drug use that may impair their ability to operate a motor vehicle.
- Tobacco use is prohibited in County vehicles.
- Fleet safety is included in performance appraisals.
- County vehicles shall be used for official County business only.



# General Safety Rules

---

- Weekly Vehicle Safety Check (by driver):
  - Check fluids (oil, brakes, power steering, washer, coolant)
  - Inspect lights, horn, brakes, tires, mirrors, wipers
  - Ensure valid inspection/tag; clean interior/exterior
- Before Driving:
  - Adjust seat, mirrors, and steering wheel
  - Test brakes before moving
- Maintenance & Oversight:
  - Maintenance every 4,000 miles
  - Department Heads ensure compliance
  - Monthly safety checklists due by the 5th of each month



# General Safety Rules (cont.)

---

- Driver Responsibility:
  - Emergency drivers are still liable for reckless behavior
  - Use caution—even with warning devices
- Safety Rules:
  - No driving under the influence of drugs or fatigue
  - Seat belts required (EMS exception for patient care)
  - No unauthorized passengers
  - Never leave a vehicle running unattended



# General Safety Rules (cont.)

---

- **Parking & Backing:**
  - Secure vehicle (brake, gear, wheels turned)
  - Use signals, flagman, or a horn when backing
- **Driving Conduct:**
  - Obey speed limits, yield when needed
  - Keep safe following distance
  - Signal 100 ft in advance; avoid sudden stops
  - Use low-beam headlights in poor visibility
- **Fueling Safety:**
  - Shut the engine off
  - No smoking near pumps
  - Avoid overfilling or spilling fuel



# Accident Reporting

---

- Report all incidents immediately to the Department Head or Supervisor.
- The supervisor reports accidents to HR within 24 hours.
- Drug and alcohol testing required for all involved employees.
- Notify law enforcement and follow investigation procedures.
- Render first aid if qualified and arrange medical help.





# Training Guidelines

---

- Defensive driving course required for new hires in safety-sensitive positions.
- Recertification every 5 years (yearly for Law Enforcement/EMS or any employees who drive emergency traffic)
- Employees involved in accidents must attend the next available training.





# Fuel Conservation and Record Keeping

---

- Guidelines for fuel efficiency:
  - Drive under 60 mph, avoid excessive idling, and use cruise control.
  - Remove unnecessary items and plan trips efficiently.
- Log books required for County vehicles:
  - Record driver, time, date, mileage, destination/job
  - Submit logs monthly to the Safety Coordinator



# Discipline and Penalties

---

- Violations, citations, and fines are the employee's responsibility.
- Non-compliance may result in disciplinary action, up to termination.
- Disciplinary procedures follow the County Personnel Policy.
- Defensive driving course is required after accidents.



# County Policy

---

- Alexander County's Motor Vehicle Policy can be found on the County website under Employee Information → Safety
- <https://alexandercountync.gov/pdf/motor-vehicle-policy.pdf>
- Any questions?



# Defensive Driving Review



# What is Defensive Driving?

---

Defensive driving is a set of practices that helps drivers anticipate and avoid potential hazards on the road, ultimately reducing the risk of accidents. It involves being aware of your surroundings, maintaining focus, and being prepared to react quickly to unexpected situations.



# Impacts of Vehicle Accidents

---

- Personal injury or death
- Peripheral injury or death to others
- Vehicle and equipment loss
- Long-term impact





# Defensive Driving Saves

---

- Defensive Driving Saves Time
  - Lost time due to injuries, investigations, and vehicle out of service
- Defensive Driving Saves Money
  - Money lost due to injury, property damage, and lost work time



# Driving Safety

---

- Driver Condition:
  - Health issues affect driving ability
  - Avoid driving when unwell (e.g., colds, flu)
- Drowsy Driving:
  - Warning signs: yawning, drifting lanes, difficulty focusing
  - Prevention tips: rest, regular breaks, avoid medications that cause drowsiness





# Driving Safety

---

- Distracted Driving:
  - Texting, eating, grooming, adjusting devices
  - Avoid distractions to ensure safety





# Alcohol and Medications

---

- Alcohol:
  - Impairs judgment, reaction time, and coordination
  - Plan alternative transportation if drinking
- Medications:
  - Check effects before driving
  - Avoid driving if medication causes drowsiness



# Protect Yourself and Passengers

---

- **Seat Belts:**
  - Mandatory for all occupants
  - Exemptions for certain vehicles and conditions
- **Child Safety:**
  - Use crash-tested child safety seats
  - Booster seats for children who outgrow standard seats
- **Air Bags:**
  - Children under 12 should ride in the back seat
  - Proper seat belt use enhances airbag effectiveness



# General Driving

---

- Pedestrians:
  - Yield right-of-way at intersections and crosswalks
  - Special consideration for blind pedestrians
- Emergency Vehicles:
  - Pull over and stop for approaching emergency vehicles
  - Move over for stopped emergency/service vehicles



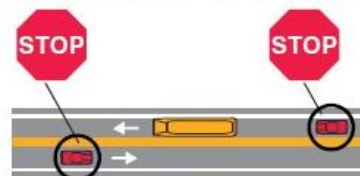




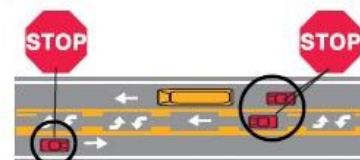
# School Bus Safety

- Stop for buses with flashing red lights or stop signals

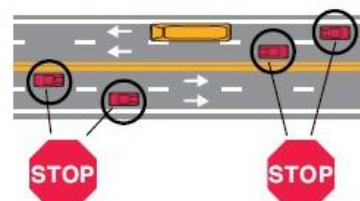
## North Carolina SCHOOL BUS STOP LAW



**Two-lane roadway:** When school bus stops for passengers, all traffic from both directions must stop.

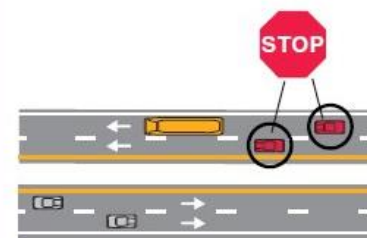


**Two-lane roadway with a center turning lane:** When school bus stops for passengers, all traffic from both directions must stop.

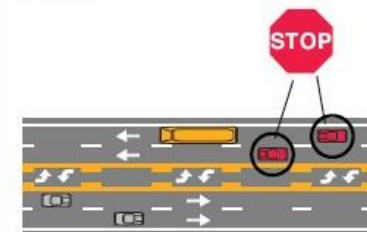


**Four-lane roadway without a median separation:** When school bus stops for passengers, all traffic from both directions must stop.

*More information on reverse.*



**Any divided highway with a median separation:** When school bus stops for passengers, only traffic following the bus must stop.



**Roadway of four lanes or more with a center turning lane:** When school bus stops for passengers, only traffic following the bus must stop.



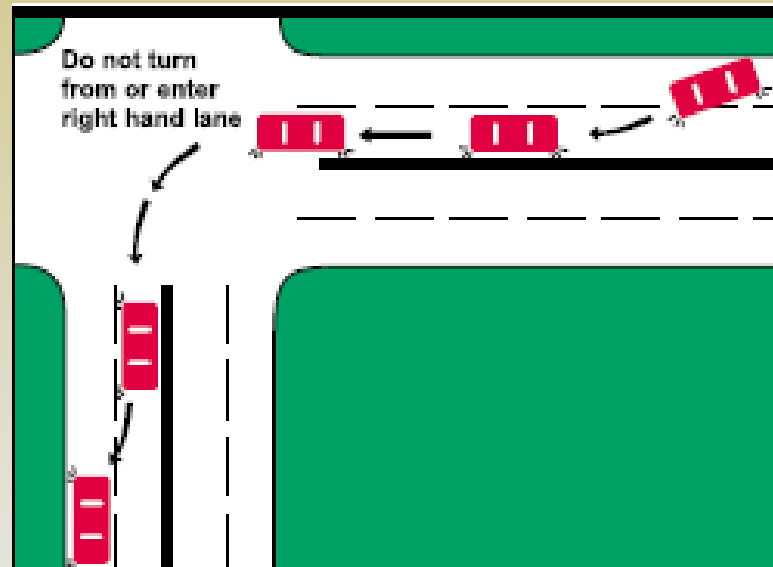
**N.C. Division of Motor Vehicles  
School Bus & Traffic Safety**  
3117 Mail Service Center  
Raleigh, NC 27697-3117

Phone: (919) 715-7000  
Fax: (919) 715-3306  
[www.ncdot.gov/dmv](http://www.ncdot.gov/dmv)



# Basic Driving Skills

- Speed Adjustment:
  - Follow posted speed limits
  - Use the "two-second rule" for safe following distance
- Turning and Passing:
  - Signal intentions early
  - Pass only where safe and legal
- Parking:
  - Avoid parking in restricted areas (e.g., intersections, fire hydrants)





# Interchanges and Intersections

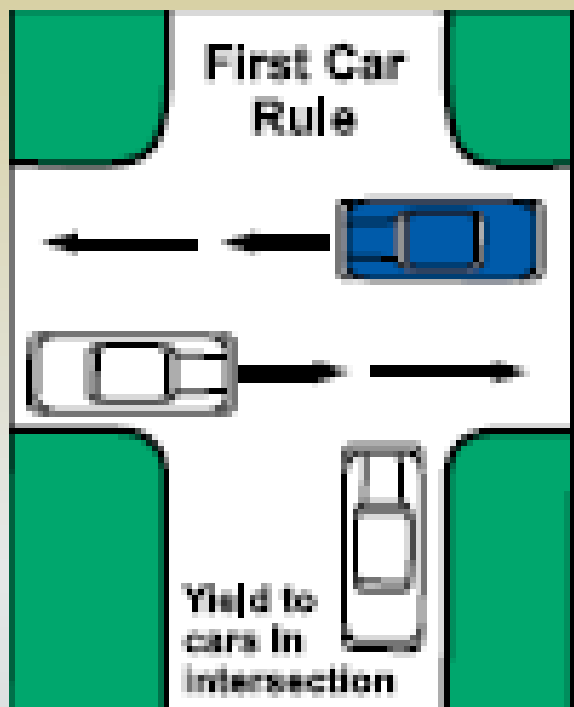
---

- Interchanges: Special intersections where roads cross at different levels
  - Slow down and follow signs carefully.
- Intersections: Where two or more roads meet; most dangerous driving areas
  - Over 1/3 of fatal crashes occur at intersections.
  - Always slow down, even if you have the right-of-way.
- Right-of-Way Basics:
  - The vehicle already in the intersection goes first.
  - If two vehicles arrive at the same time, yield to the right.
  - Vehicles going straight have priority over those turning left.

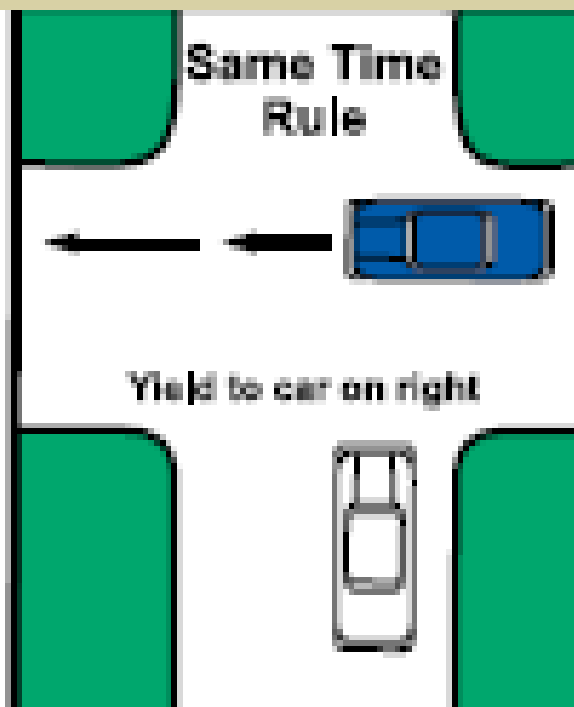


# Interchanges and Intersections

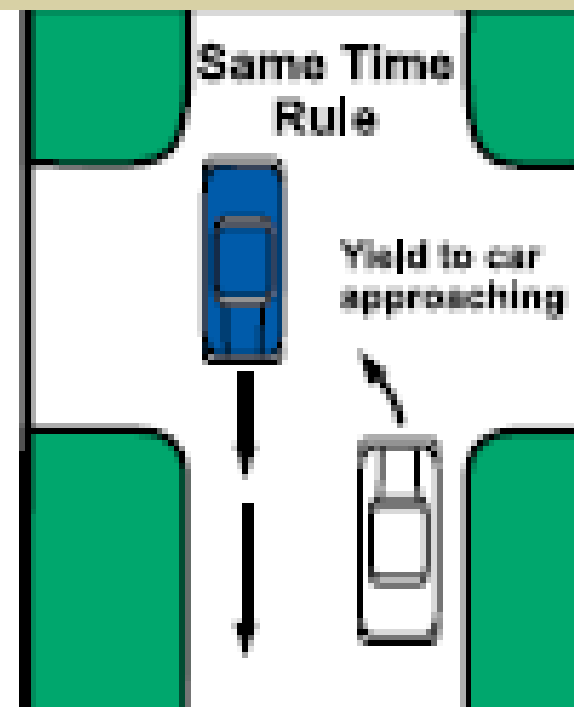
**First Car Rule**



**Same Time Rule**



**Same Time Rule**

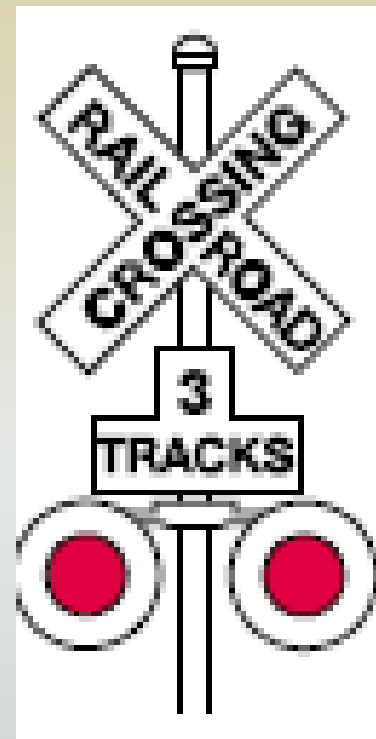




# Railroad Crossing Safety

---

- Approaching a Railroad Crossing: Always slow down, look both ways, and listen.
- Stop 15–50 feet from the nearest rail if:
  - Lights/gates/flagger signal a train
  - A train is audible or visible within 1,500 feet
  - A gate is lowered or in motion
- Never:
  - Drive around or under lowered gates
  - Stop on railroad tracks
  - Change lanes while crossing tracks
- Legal & Safety Notes:
  - Trains always have the right-of-way — even over emergency vehicles
  - Violation is an infraction punishable under G.S. 20-176.
  - Employers of CDL drivers may face penalties for violations.

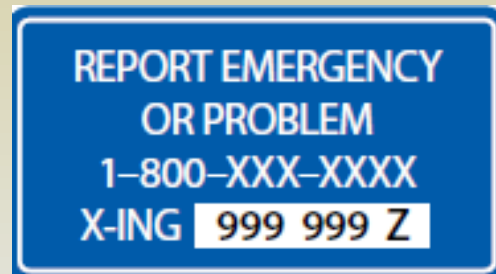




# Railroad Crossing Safety

---

- **Emergency? Use the Blue Sign!**
  - Located near each crossing
  - Lists the crossing ID, railroad name, and emergency phone number
  - Use it to stop a train fast during emergencies
- **General Tips:**
  - Flashing red = stop and wait
  - After one train passes, look both ways for a second.
  - Don't panic if the gate lowers behind you — keep moving forward.
  - Yield to school buses and hazardous material vehicles — they must stop.
- **Trains take over a mile to stop at 55 mph! Your vehicle can stop. A train can't.**







# Vehicle Equipment

---

- All vehicle equipment must be in good working order
- Properly functioning equipment ensures safety and legal compliance
- Regular inspections help prevent breakdowns and accidents
- Follow manufacturer and state guidelines



# Lighting Systems

---

- Ensure lighting is working during check-offs.
- High beams: see 200 ft ahead; low beams: 75 ft
- Headlights must be properly adjusted—check regularly
- Taillights visible for at least 500 ft; red or amber brake/turn lights visible for 100 ft
- License plate light must illuminate from 50 ft



# Mirrors

- Adjust mirrors before driving—rear-view shows behind; side mirrors show the sides





# Brakes and Tires

---

- Brake pedal should not sink too low; check if spongy or squeaky
- ABS: Apply firm, steady pressure—do not pump brakes
- Minimum tread depth: 1/16 inch
- Check pressure monthly when tires are cool
- Avoid over/under-inflation—affects wear, traction, and blowout risk





# Defensive Driving Tips

---

- Scanning the Road Ahead:
  - Look 10–15 seconds ahead (about one city block)
  - Check mirrors every 10 seconds
  - Monitor blind spots before changing lanes, turning, or backing up
  - Keep eyes on the road – avoid lingering looks in mirrors
  - Leave yourself an “out” – always plan an escape route
- Communicating with Others:
  - Signal every time you turn, stop, slow down, or change lanes – even if no one is visible
  - Use turn signals or hand signals
  - Signal at least 100 feet before turning (200 feet if the speed limit is 45+ mph).
  - Be clear and early to avoid confusion or collisions



# Defensive Driving Tips

---

- Keeping a Margin of Safety:
  - Maintain space ahead, behind, and on both sides
  - Drive at a steady speed
  - Signal well in advance when slowing or stopping
  - If followed too closely, change lanes and let the driver pass
- Adjusting to Hazards:
  - When facing multiple dangers, give space to the greater threat
    - Example: More space for a child on a bike than for oncoming traffic
  - If hazards are equal, stop and wait for the safer option to clear



# Hazardous Driving - Work Zones

---

- Stay Alert in Work Zones:
  - Watch for black-on-orange signs indicating work zones
  - Slow down and follow posted speed limits – speeding fines double if posted
  - Work zones may distract drivers even without lane closures
- Flagger Ahead:
  - Look for “Flagger” signs and obey STOP/SLOW paddles
  - Stay alert and be prepared to stop or change lanes early
- Safe Driving Tips in Work Zones:
  - Don’t wait until the last minute to react
  - Maintain a safe speed and following distance
  - Watch for cones, barriers, and confined driving lanes







# Hazardous Driving - Weather

---

- Night Driving:
  - Use low beams in cities, high beams on open roads (unless approaching others)
  - Stay alert for tired or impaired drivers
  - Clean windshields and reduce speed for limited visibility
- Sun Glare:
  - Use visors and sunglasses; stop if glare is severe





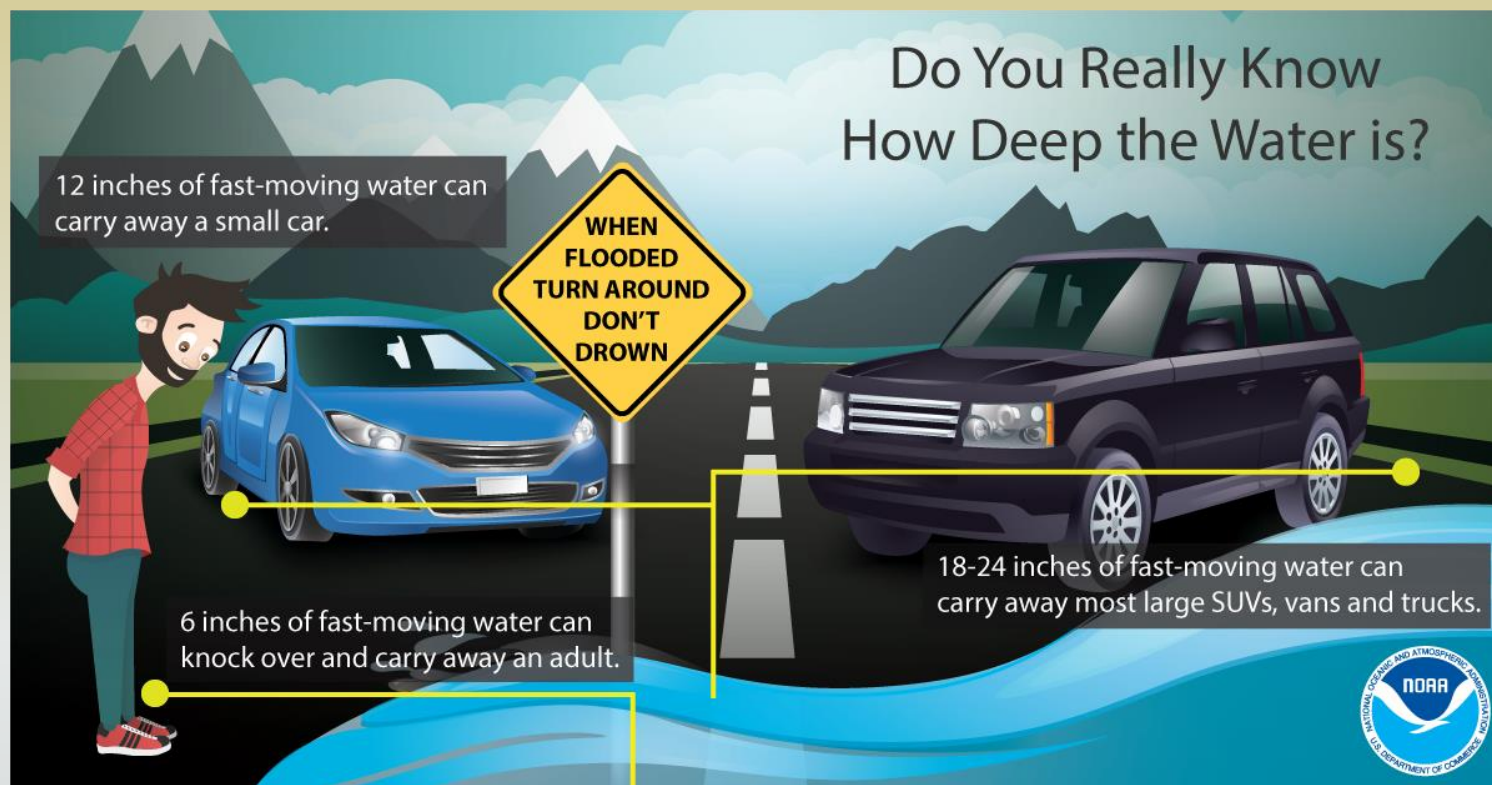
# Hazardous Driving - Weather

---

- Rain and Hydroplaning:
  - Roads are slickest in the first 15 minutes of rainfall
  - Drive 5–10 mph slower and maintain extra following distance
  - If hydroplaning: ease off the gas, steer straight, don't brake suddenly
- Flooding:
  - Never drive through standing water
  - Just 6 inches of moving water can sweep a car away
- Fog, Snow, and Ice:
  - Use low beams, slow down, and allow 3x stopping distance
  - Watch for shaded/icy areas and use chains if needed



# Hazardous Driving-Weather





# General Emergency Tips

---

- Brake Failure:
  - Manual transmission: Shift to lower gear, release clutch, use emergency brake
  - Automatic transmission: Shift to low gear, use emergency brake
  - Note: Emergency brake use may cause damage — safety first
- Wet Brakes:
  - Drive a short distance slowly
  - Apply light, steady brake pressure
  - Use lower gear instead of brakes on steep hills



# General Emergency Tips

---

- Gas Pedal Sticks:
  - Tap or lift the pedal with your foot
  - Shift to neutral, brake firmly
  - Pull off the road safely
- Tire Blowout:
  - Loud noise + swerving = possible blowout
  - Hold the wheel firmly, ease off the accelerator
  - Avoid braking until the vehicle slows
  - Pull off the road safely, set the brake, and block the wheels
  - Use flares, and exit passengers safely



# General Emergency Tips

---

- Skids and Slippery Roads:
  - Ease off the accelerator
  - Turn into the skid, then back to straighten
  - For ABS: Firm, steady pressure
  - Without ABS: Pump brakes gently
- Unusual Emergencies:
  - Oncoming vehicle in your lane: Slow down, sound horn, steer right
  - Off-road recovery: Don't brake or jerk the wheel
    - Let the vehicle slow, re-enter the road carefully



# General Emergency Tips

---

- Crash Protocol:
  - Stop immediately (it's the law)
  - Assist the injured, call 911
  - Prevent further collisions
  - If drivable, move the vehicle off the main lanes
  - Report the crash to the authorities
  - Report the accident to the Supervisor





**Any Questions?**