

Use extreme caution stopped along side of road

The Oregon Department of Transportation and the Oregon State Police advise travelers to be extra cautious when stranded or stopped along the side of the road, especially during poor weather conditions.

“Driving along Oregon highways in inclement weather can be challenging, but when people stop along the side of the road and get out of their vehicles for any reason, extreme precautions need to be taken by both those on the side of the road and nearby drivers,” said ODOT Region 5 Public Information Officer Tom Strandberg.

There are times when travelers are compelled to stop along the side of a roadway: to repair a flat tire; put on tire chains; or assist a stranded motorist. Unfortunately, people are often seriously injured or killed while outside of their vehicles along state highways.

“People need to take the time to review all options before stopping and getting out of their vehicles, especially when icy roads or limited visibility create hazardous conditions,” Strandberg said.

At times, Good Samaritans who have stopped to help at a crash scene have been seriously injured or killed on Oregon highways when other motorists have lost control of their vehicles on slick roads.

“It is a terrible tragedy when good people who are trying to help others end up worse off than those they are trying to assist,” said Strandberg.

In some cases, especially during winter storms, the best way to help is to get to a phone as soon as possible and report the incident, giving clear directions so emergency responders can arrive quickly. Just don’t talk on a cell phone while driving.

Before you pull off the road

If you have a flat tire or need to stop along the highway, check the following before pulling off of the road.

- Note mile markers and landmarks to provide to emergency service providers



when calling for help.

- Make sure there is enough room along the road shoulder to pull completely off of the road.
- Never stop in the roadway or on bridges, avoid areas with narrow shoulders.
- If you are compelled to stop and help a stranded motorist during poor weather conditions, take careful note of the surrounding area, highway and weather conditions. It is often safer for the stranded motorists, other travelers and yourself to call for help, rather than stopping in an area that could create more hazards. Note the color of the vehicle, landmarks and mile markers to provide to 911 operators.

If you have to stop

If there is no option other than stopping along the side of the highway, consider the following tips.

- Pull as far off the right side of the road as possible, avoid stopping along the left

side of the road or center median areas.

- Turn on emergency flashers. Check

your mirrors and look to rear to make sure it is safe to get out of your vehicle. Face traffic when setting out flares or reflective triangles.

- Flares and other warning devices should be placed far enough away from the vehicle to give oncoming traffic time to react.

- Stay buckled up inside your vehicle and keep all passengers buckled if you are stranded.

- Turn and lock the steering wheel away from the travel lanes so the vehicle will not be pushed into traffic if struck from behind.

- Use extreme caution when outside the vehicle to put on chains, change tire, etc. If available, wear a reflective vest or bright clothing. If it’s not safe, don’t get out of your car.

- Don’t extend legs or body onto roadway while working on vehicle.

- Familiarize yourself with the surrounding area and note location of steep embankments, drop-offs beyond railings, water hazards or other dangerous conditions.

- When outside the vehicle, carefully watch the road and plan safe escape routes in case you need to move quickly to avoid out of control traffic.

Move over law

When approaching the rear of a stopped emergency vehicle which is on the roadside with emergency lights activated, Oregon Law requires drivers to move over into another lane if one is available. Law enforcement, highway workers and emergency responders know all too well of the dangers of working along the side of the road, especially during an emergency.

“Police officers understand these

dangers because highway-related incidents are taking more officers lives than ever before,” says Oregon State Police Lieutenant Gregg Hastings. “That is why Oregon is one of many states that has a ‘Move Over’ law to help protect emergency responders working on our highways.”

If you can not move over into another lane safely (or if you are on a road with only one lane in each direction), you must slow down and give the emergency vehicle as much room as is safely possible.

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