



Tips for driving safely in fog

Thick fog is a common winter driving hazard. When you are driving in fog, you should slow down to adjust to the reduced visibility. In the most severe situations, a Dense Fog Advisory will be issued if visibility is reduced to less than one-quarter mile. Check www.TripCheck.com for more information, and follow these safety tips:

- Slow down. Disengage your cruise control. Most crashes occur because the driver is going too fast for weather conditions.
- Use your low beams. High beams will reflect back thick fog, making visibility worse for you and other drivers.
- Keep your car headlights clean. Get in the habit of wiping off your lights at the gas station; that way you're ready for low-visibility conditions.
- Keep the view clear. Avoid fogged

windows by regularly using the defroster and windshield wipers. Moisture can build up on the windshield both inside and out; the air conditioning setting will help keep moisture from building up inside.

- Minimize distractions. Turn off the music and don't talk on your cell phone, so you can listen for traffic you cannot see.
- Increase following distance to ensure enough time to stop safely.
- Watch for emergency stops by other vehicles; watch for slow-moving and parked vehicles.
- Use the right edge of the road, white fog line or roadside reflectors as a guide. Do not change lanes or pass other vehicles unless necessary.
- If you pull off the road, pull over as far as possible, turn off your headlights and turn on your hazard lights.

Low visibility conditions require caution

Driving at night is more difficult because of reduced visibility. However, low visibility conditions can also occur during the day, caused by heavy rain, thick fog, snowfall, dust or smoke. Follow these safety tips for driving in low visibility conditions:

- Slow down. Disengage your cruise control. Most crashes occur because the driver is going too fast for the weather conditions.
- Use your low beams. High beam lights will reflect back off the thick fog or snow, making visibility worse for you and other drivers.
- Avoid entering an area if you cannot see a safe distance ahead.
- If you suddenly encounter a severe loss of visibility, pull off the pavement as far as possible. Stop, turn off your lights, set the emergency brake and take your foot

off the brake to be sure the taillights are not illuminated.

- Turn on your emergency flashers.
 - If you can't pull off the roadway, slow down, turn on your low beam headlights and sound the horn occasionally. Use the white fog line or roadside reflectors if necessary to help guide you.
 - Never stop in the travel lanes.
- "Too fast" is too risky!**

The third most common driver error causing crashes is driving too fast for conditions. More than 10 percent of crashes had this error as the main reason for the crash. Every year, in fact, "driving too fast for conditions" shows up in the top five most common reasons for crashes. Slow down! You must make adjustments in your driving when road conditions have changed.

Use fog lights correctly and safely

With increasing numbers of vehicles on the road with fog or auxiliary lights, state transportation safety officials are reminding people to use vehicle lighting correctly and safely.

"Fog lights are designed to be used at low speeds in fog, heavy mist, snow and other situations where visibility is significantly reduced," said Michele O'Leary, ODOT Vehicle Equipment Standards Program Manager.

Front fog lights are generally aimed and mounted low to increase the illumination directed towards the road surface. However, after sunset and during other low visibility situations, fog lights are required to be turned off when an oncoming vehicle approaches. During normal visibility conditions, fog or auxiliary lights should be turned off. It is not appropriate to drive with fog or auxiliary lights left on all the time.

"When a car is using fog or auxiliary lights, it is visually distracting for oncoming drivers," O'Leary said.

According to Oregon law, fog and/or auxiliary lights must be used like the high

beam headlight system of your car. They must be turned off when within 500 feet of an oncoming vehicle and within 350 feet when following another vehicle. The color of fog and/or auxiliary lights is also regulated. Fog lights may be either white or amber (yellow). Rules prohibit other colors such as blue.

If your car is equipped with auxiliary lighting, ODOT recommends knowing where the switches are and how to use them.

If you plan to install fog and/or auxiliary lights as an after market feature, it is important to know that Oregon has adopted federal rules that all manufacturers must meet. Products must be labeled; anything that is labeled "not for street use" cannot be used on public roadways. Fog and other auxiliary lights must have a separate switch.

Fog lights may not be used in lieu of headlights.

For more information on vehicle equipment and standards, visit ODOT's Transportation Safety Web site, www.oregon.gov/ODOT/TS/Veh_Equipment.shtml, or see the Oregon Driver Manual on the DMV Web site, www.oregondmv.com.



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