

# MSU - Dawg Tracks

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MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY™  
EXTENSION

*Safety Tips:  
Avoiding Car Accidents*

The National Safety Council recently released a study that indicated seatbelt use varies from state to state and that the lack of drivers buckling up continues to be the leading cause of traffic accidents in the USA. In 1999, an estimated 9,500 people died unnecessarily because they weren't wearing seatbelts. With no actual current count available, this figure has dropped due to the many states passing mandatory seatbelt use laws.

Following are some tips (derived from a study produced by <http://auto.howstuffworks.com/car-driving-safety>) that will help you to avoid an accident:

**Position for good posture** – Good posture is necessary to be able to reach the steering wheel and foot pedals, in case you have to make an evasive traffic maneuver.

**Position all mirrors** – Position your side and rear-view mirrors so that you can see as much of the road as possible.

**Position hands on steering wheel** – Place one hand at 3:00 on the steering and the other at 9:00. This position allows the driver to make the most coordinated and quickest response during an emergency. You don't need to get caught in an emergency while driving with one hand on the steering wheel.

**Double check when wearing glasses or contacts when driving** – You may have passed an eye test or maybe the license didn't require an eye test, but you know that it pays to be able to see the road and the surroundings as clearly as possible.

**Make sure that the vehicle is operating properly** – A vehicle can have operational failure from a blown out tire, worn brakes, broken windshield or wiper, etc. To help avoid vehicle failure, be sure that your vehicle has regular inspections and adequate maintenance performed on a regular basis.

**Anticipate unexpected changes in traffic** – Pay attention to traffic flow so you can anticipate changes in traffic patterns. Sometimes you can be aware of an emergency by watching the flow of vehicles in front of you.

**Judge a car by its cover** – This is more or less self-explanatory: you can get a pretty good indication of the demeanor of the driver of a car by observing the condition of the vehicle.

**Know your vehicle's limits** – A driver can push their vehicle beyond the limits of the manufactured capability. No matter what type of vehicle you may be driving, be totally familiar with the emergency stopping capability, etc.

**Avoid the left lane** – The center or right hand lane offers the most protection and the most available access from the highway in case of an emergency. A situation can arise before you realize it. Most highway accidents occur in the fast (left) lane.

**Avoid driving at night (unless it is necessary)** – Night time driving is hazardous for several reasons: more difficult to see, this is the time that drivers experience more fatigue, and you're more apt to encounter drunk drivers at night.

**Avoid tailgating** – Following too close doesn't give you enough time to execute an emergency maneuver. It has been recommended that you allow three to five seconds lead time between you and the vehicle in front of you. As tempting as it might be when you're in a hurry, tailgating is a major cause of accidents.

**Avoid driving in hazardous conditions (unless you have to)** – Ice, snow, fog, and rain are dangerous no matter what type of vehicle that you're driving or how good a driver you are.

**Avoid driving over the posted speed limit** – Excessive speed reduces your reaction time. Exceeding the speed limit also increases your potential for an accident.

**Check for blind spots** – Most every vehicle has a blind spot and not necessarily in the same location. In the apparel industry we had a saying to "check twice and cut once." We can apply this adage to driving as well: always double check in all directions before making a lane change.

**Keep your eyes out for pedestrians** – Children, joggers, pets, and bikers can appear out of nowhere. Always be on the lookout.

**Other drivers** – No matter how careful you are personally, you never know what that other "dude" will do. So, it behooves you to constantly be on the lookout for that vehicle that you are meeting on the road. You may meet one in the midst of a "road rage."

**Look both ways before turning** – As you arrive at an intersection, look both ways twice, in case you missed something. The first time, look all around you for pedestrians, joggers, and other objects.

**Don't accelerate the minute the light changes** – Have you ever run a "red light" when you're in a hurry? Other people have done this as well. Watch out for these type of folks.

**Be aware of 18-wheelers** – At an intersection you have an 18-wheeler to pull up by your side. Remember that the truck driver has a blind spot on his right side; if you can't see his side mirrors, then he can't see you.

**Look backwards when backing out** – Fenders benders in parking lots are all too common, so look out for cars leaving parking spaces. Don't solely depend on your rear view mirrors; look over your right shoulder while steering to alleviate blind spots.

***COURTESY & COMMON SENSE  
PROMOTES SAFETY***

***LEAVE SOONER-DRIVE SLOWER  
LIVE LONGER***

***ALERT TODAY ⇔ ALIVE TOMORROW***

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Excerpts: <http://ehs.today.com/news> 10/13/2016  
<http://auto.howstuffworks.com/car-driving-safety>