



Fall 2020

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Driven

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6 Fall driving dangers and tips to stay safe

Darkness. Now that Daylight Saving Time has ended, many people will find themselves spending more time driving in the dark. Depth perception, color recognition and peripheral vision can be compromised in the dark, and the glare of headlights from an oncoming vehicle can temporarily blind a driver.

Though just 25 percent of our driving is at night, 50 percent of traffic deaths occur then.

Critters. You're 3.5 times as likely to hit an animal, especially a deer, in November as at any other time of the year. Deer are likely to be mating in November, and that's why you see more of them.

West Virginia, Montana, Pennsylvania, South Dakota and Iowa had the highest proportion of collision claims with animals between July 1, 2018, and June 30, 2019. An adult deer, the smallest of several breeds of hooved mammals, can weigh 300 pounds or more, so that's like hitting two adult men.

Leaves. As the foliage falls and winds blow, leaves litter the road. They can cause motorists to park farther from the curb to accommodate piles, create puddles as they block drainage, hide potholes and pavement markings, prompt bicyclists to stray from their designated lanes and turn into a slick mess when they coat the road during rain. That's because wet leaves create a mat that reduces traction no matter how new your tires are.

Tires. Tires perform better on rainy surfaces if they have enough tread. Also, proper tire pressure helps keep you rolling smoothly and safely. Expect your tires to drop at least 1 pound per square inch (PSI) of pressure each month, no matter the weather. When the air cools in the fall, that accelerates. Tires will drop another pound per square inch of pressure for every 10 degrees of temperature drop. Check tire pressure with a good handheld gauge from an auto parts store when the car's been sitting two or three hours. Correct pressure will be noted on a decal pasted on the driver's side door jamb or the door itself and in the owner's manual.

The pressure inscribed on the tire sidewall itself is a maximum and not the recommended inflation — though it might coincidentally match the recommended PSI for your car.

Glare. The blinding distraction of sun glare waxes as summer wanes. Sounds wrong, but it's logical because the sun moves closer to the horizon. That points it straight into your eyes and makes it more likely to reflect at low angles off buildings, other cars and windows. And keep your windshield clear, so dirt streaks don't contribute to the glare.



Fog and frost. Those harbingers of winter are fall hazards in some areas. Otherwise refreshing chilly autumn mornings can trigger fog, reducing your vision and distance perception. Fog lights shine wide, low beams along the road and onto the edges of a street, which also is helpful for critter spotting. Don't use them instead of your regular headlights but rather in addition to low-beam headlights.

Don't click on your high beams. Those make visibility worse because the bright light bounces off the fog and right back into your eyes.

When temperatures have been cold enough that moisture on the road has turned to ice in spots, slow down. Pay special attention to bridges and overpasses. All those "bridge freezes before road" signs are serious.

Driving safety tips for handling potholes

If you've been driving for awhile, you're probably used to encountering occasional potholes on the road — including some that can be rather large. You know that potholes can create an unpleasant and bumpy ride, but did you know that they may also cause damage to your vehicle?

What causes potholes?

Many potholes are caused when water seeps into soil under the pavement and then freezes and thaws, weakening the road. This may cause the pavement to crack, which, when combined with the weight of vehicles driving over the road, eventually turns these weak areas into potholes. Because of the role freezing temperatures can play in pothole formation, severe winter weather can often lead to the creation of potholes.

How can I safely handle them?

If you live in an area with lots of potholes, knowing what you can do to help safely maneuver around them is key. First, you should maintain a safe distance between your vehicle and the car in front of you so it's easier to spot potholes ahead. You should also use caution when approaching puddles of water as they could really be potholes in hiding.

If you can't avoid hitting a pothole, slow down before you hit it and firmly grip the wheel to help avoid losing control of your vehicle. To potentially minimize the impact that hitting a pothole can have on your car, ensure your tires are

inflated to the manufacturer's recommended level.

An under-inflated tire may not have enough resistance to withstand the impact of a pothole. Lastly, you should ensure your car's suspension is in good condition. It may be a good idea to have a mechanic help you confirm this.



What kind of car damage can potholes cause?

In addition to causing damage to the tire itself, potholes may cause alignment or suspension problems to your vehicle. Below are some signs that your car may have sustained damage after hitting a pothole:

- One or more deflated tires
- Severe cracks or bulges in the tires
- The vehicle shaking and pulling to the left or right, which could indicate an alignment problem

- Dents in the wheel rims
- Fluid leaks, which may mean your undercarriage is damaged
- Odd noises coming from the exhaust system

If you notice any of these issues, you may want to take your car to a repair facility to have it checked for damage as soon as possible. If the pothole did cause damage to your vehicle, it may be a good idea to call your insurance agent to see if your auto policy might help cover some of the repair costs.

Some potholes are unavoidable, but learning how to safely handle them on the road may help you save money and frustration down the road. The next time you see a pothole ahead, remember to slow down, and call your mechanic right away if you notice any subsequent issues with your vehicle. It might also be a good idea to notify any transportation authorities so they are aware of potholes that need to be filled.

Source: driving-tests.org

5 Safety tips for driving during the coronavirus pandemic

Be cautious of touching fuel pumps when filling your vehicle.

The average fuel pump handle is 11,835 times dirtier than a public toilet seat. Consider wearing protective gloves when fueling up, but make sure you know how to properly remove them to avoid contamination.

Limit the number of stops.

Be strategic about where and how many stops you make while out and about. Plan your drives for the week if possible, to avoid making excessive stops and increasing your risk of exposure.

Leverage contactless payments.

Utilize contactless payment methods as much as possible when making purchases. Contactless payments include Apple Pay, Samsung Pay, and Android Pay. This reduces contact to commonly touched surfaces like the credit card terminals at checkout.

Use hand sanitizer every time you enter your vehicle.

This helps you avoid contaminating the vehicle with germs you might have picked up elsewhere.

Disinfect your vehicle every day.

Wipe down all frequently touched surfaces with disinfectant wipes daily if not multiple times throughout the day. Common germy surfaces include:

- Steering wheel
- Interior door handles
- Gear-shift knob
- Seatbelts
- Radio dials
- Cup holders
- Dashboard

It's important to stay on top of new information being released locally and federally as the COVID-19 pandemic is evolving every day. Be sure to visit your state and local government websites regularly.