

REDUCE HAZARDS, IMPROVE SAFETY

Many jobs require an employee to drive a motor vehicle. Doing so safely is an important step toward ensuring that both the employee and others occupying the roadway get to where they are going without injury, interruption or unnecessary delay.

Auto physical damage claims continue to be the most frequently reported loss by MCIT members. Training drivers to be safe does more than protect a member's fleet from physical damage; it also helps prevent injuries to employees and citizens.



VEHICLE DESIGN AND SAFETY TECHNOLOGY

The safe operation of a motor vehicle begins with understanding how the vehicle's safety features work and how to use them properly.

Motor vehicles are manufactured with a multitude of features designed to improve the overall safe operation of the vehicle. Collision mitigation systems, lane departure sensors, anti-lock brakes and all-wheel drive traction are just some of the features that are intended to mitigate potential motor vehicle crashes. Below is a description of many safety features found on recently manufactured vehicles (not all features are present in every vehicle).

Adaptive cruise control automatically adjusts a vehicle's speed so as to maintain a safe distance from any other vehicles ahead of the vehicle. Drivers must remain cognizant of any changing road conditions that would make it necessary to turn off the cruise control feature to maintain control of their vehicle.

Adaptive headlights: Although many new vehicles are equipped with a sensor that automatically activates the vehicles headlights whenever the natural light level is diminished, it is recommended to always drive with headlights engaged, regardless of weather or light conditions. Relying on the diminished natural light sensor only turns the vehicles headlights on and does not activate the vehicles taillights, which leaves the vehicle susceptible to being struck from behind in low-light conditions.

All-wheel drive can greatly improve a driver's ability to travel safely through material such as snow, sand or others that may be present on a roadway. An all-wheel drive vehicle employs a drive train that provides power to all four of a vehicle's wheels, thus giving the driver an increased ability to travel through less than ideal road conditions. Drivers must not assume an all-wheel drive vehicle is not susceptible to a loss of control when driving in these conditions and should drive with extra caution when doing so.

Anti-lock braking system (ABS) is specifically designed to prevent a vehicle's wheels from locking while braking. Drivers need to recognize that any time the vehicle's wheels (especially the front wheels) stop rotating, the vehicle is much more susceptible to skidding and much harder to control.

Applying gradual and steady pressure to the brake pedal ensures that the driver is able safely to bring the vehicle to a controlled stop.

Automatic emergency braking can detect an impending front-end crash and may be able to prevent it if the driver fails to react accordingly. The system automatically applies the brakes, causing it to slow or stop in an attempt to avoid the crash or reduce the severity of the impact.

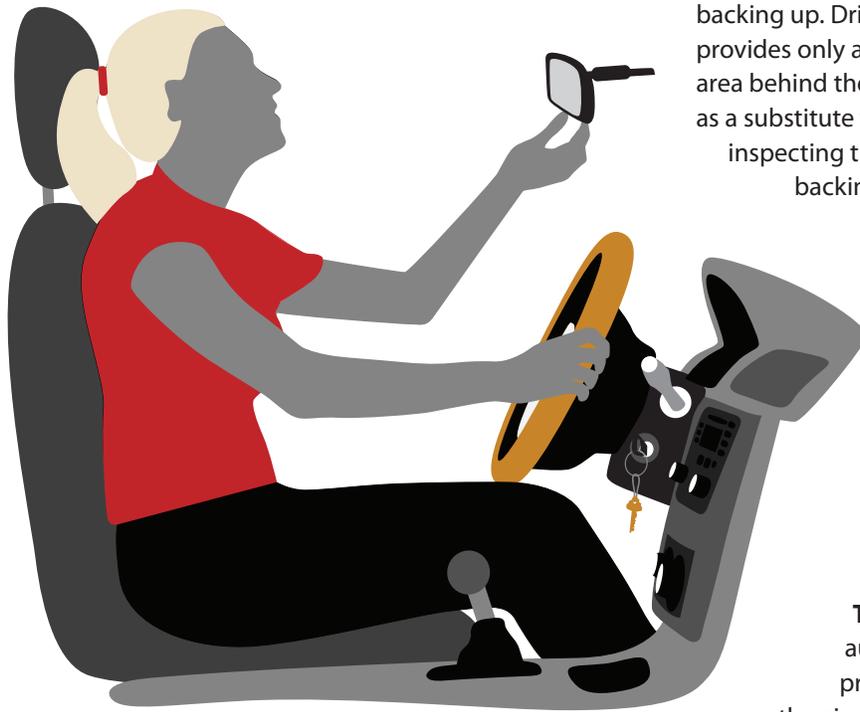
Automatic tire chains offers the traction of a single set of conventional snow chains at the flip of a dashboard switch, without having to stop the vehicle. The switch allows compressed air to enter an air cylinder and lower the chain wheel so it contacts the inside of the tire, thereby providing the vehicle with much better traction when driving in moderate to deep snow on a roadway.

Collision mitigation system uses wave radar and/or a camera system to monitor what is occurring in front of, alongside of or behind a vehicle. If the system senses an object is close to or may be in the travel path of the vehicle, it automatically applies slow braking in an attempt to avoid a collision with the object.

Hill start aid helps prevent a vehicle from unintentionally rolling downhill. The hill start aid maintains enough brake pressure on the vehicle so the driver can transition from the brake to the accelerator without having the vehicle roll. On manual transmission vehicles, this feature maintains brake pressure while the driver is releasing pressure on the transmission clutch.

Intelligent power train management: This feature is often found on many new trucks or other commercial vehicles. The system integrates preloaded terrain maps and GPS data into engine and transmission functions so that the vehicle can efficiently utilize its own momentum to navigate the terrain. This may make for better fuel efficiency as well. The system generally has an effective range of one mile.

Lane departure/blind spot warning may be an audio or visual alert, notifying the driver any time the vehicle drifts outside of its designated lane of travel or any time another vehicle enters the area adjacent



backing up. Drivers must recognize that the camera provides only a limited and distorted view of the area behind the vehicle and should never be used as a substitute for physically walking around and inspecting the area behind the vehicle before backing up.

Rear cross-traffic warning assists a driver in identifying a hazard when backing up. The rear cross-traffic warning system monitors the area behind a vehicle any time the vehicle is placed in reverse. When backing, the driver is alerted if there are any other vehicles or pedestrians approaching from either the right or left that enters the vehicle's pathway.

Tire pressure monitoring is an automatic sensor that measures the air pressure in each of the vehicle's tires. If the air pressure in any of the tires drops 25 percent or more below the recommended level, the sensor activates the dashboard indicator light, notifying the driver to check and adjust the tire pressure accordingly.

Traction control/electronic stability control monitors and detects wheel slippage and vehicle stability. If any wheel slippage is detected or if the system detects one wheel is spinning faster than the others, the traction control system automatically applies the ABS to that one wheel. This ensures that the vehicle's traction is effectively maintained. When the pavement is dry and clean, a vehicle does not need traction control. The advantages of turning off traction control under normal conditions are a measurable improvement in gas mileage and a slight reduction in tire wear. The electronic stability control system monitors a vehicle's stability, loss of traction or skidding and may reduce the vehicle's engine power until the vehicle's stability and traction is regained.

Vehicle performance monitoring/remote diagnostics can track important driver behaviors and vehicle performance metrics that might affect areas such as a vehicle's fuel consumption and routine maintenance issues. This information can help a fleet manager or others responsible for an organization's vehicle with better and timelier decisions involving a motor vehicle's maintenance and performance and allow for adjustments if necessary.

to the vehicle that cannot be viewed through the use of the rear-view mirrors. Drivers must maintain control of their vehicles at all times and prevent any unintentional or unsafe departure from their lane of travel and always look over their shoulders before changing lanes.

Low voltage disconnect system automatically disconnects all noncritical loads from a vehicle's battery whenever the voltage from the battery falls below an established threshold. The disconnected loads are automatically re-connected when the battery is being charged or when it is above the established voltage threshold. This process helps maintain enough battery power for a vehicle to start and continue operating.

On-board diagnostics capture data measuring a vehicle's performance and/or maintenance issues. This information can easily be accessed through a series of codes retrievable from the diagnostic system. Using a code reader, a vehicle repair technician often starts an assessment of any needed vehicle repairs by accessing the on-board diagnostic system and interpreting the code.

Rear-camera/backup collision warning is a device that allows the driver to view the area immediately behind the vehicle and provides an audio alert when an object is in the path of the vehicle when it is

VEHICLE TELEMATICS

Vehicle telematics are best described as on-board safety monitoring devices. They capture information related to a driver's behavior and a vehicle's movement. For example, a vehicle's speed, acceleration rate, sudden braking, fuel consumption and other metrics are recorded. An employer may use the data to curtail unsafe driving behavior. This information can also be extremely beneficial toward determining factors leading to a motor vehicle incident (or near incident), as well as where fault may rest with the drivers involved.

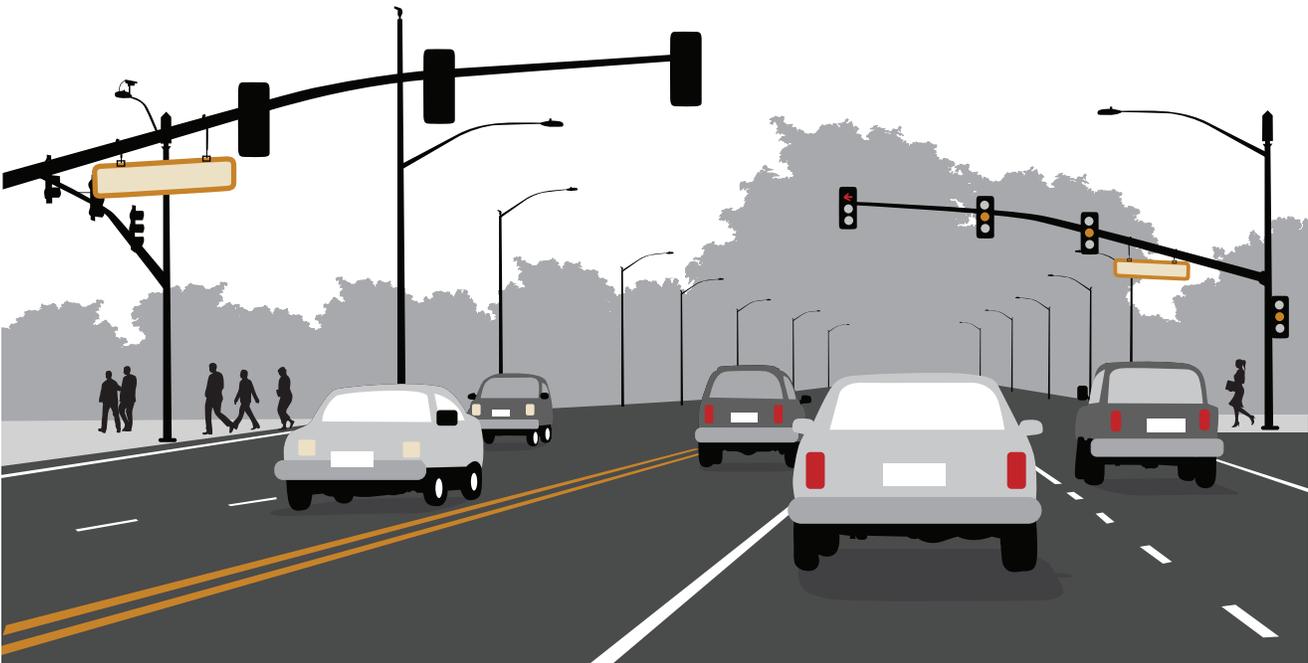
Vehicle telematics can also employ GPS data to monitor routes of travel and ensure that employees are using company vehicles for business purposes or other authorized uses.

The use of vehicle telematics has proven to be extremely beneficial toward reducing unsafe driving behavior. Trials conducted in 2005 by Norwich Union determined that drivers, especially younger drivers between the ages of 18 and 23, exhibited a 20 percent lower-than-average crash rate when vehicle telematics were in use.

VEHICLE SAFETY EQUIPMENT

The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations (FMCSR) at 49 CFR 393.95 state that all commercial motor vehicles must carry specific safety equipment. This includes:

- A fire extinguisher that has a UL rating of 5B:C or more; or two fire extinguishers with a rating of 4B:C or more.
- Spare fuses that are needed to operate any required parts or accessories of the power unit (or engine/cab of the vehicle). At least one spare fuse is required for each type/size of fuse needed.
- Warning devices for stopped vehicles, which could include:
 - ◆ Three bidirectional emergency reflective triangles that conform to the requirements of Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard No. 125, Section 571.125; or
 - ◆ At least six fusees or three liquid-burning flares. The vehicle must have as many additional fusees or liquid-burning flares as are necessary to satisfy the requirements of Section 392.22.
- Other warning devices may be used in addition to, but not in lieu of, the required warning devices, provided those warning devices do not decrease the effectiveness of the required warning devices.



VEHICLE AND DRIVER READINESS

Before operating a vehicle, a driver must ensure the equipment is in good working condition and that he or she is prepared for driving. Minnesota statutes dictate a number of requirements under which drivers with commercial driver's licenses must perform. This chapter does not examine those requirements specifically, but includes best practices that all drivers should follow. *See Chapter 1 for information about required vehicle inspections.*

Members should consider developing a checklist that employees complete before driving a vehicle on company time.

VEHICLE READINESS

BEFORE ENTERING VEHICLE

The driver should:

- › Walk around the car, looking for obstacles that might impede driving, particularly when backing up.
- › Ensure that tires are inflated and have good tread.
- › Make sure windows, headlights and taillights are clean, undamaged and in operating order.
- › Check under vehicle to ensure that fluids are not leaking.

BEFORE OPERATING VEHICLE

Drivers should:

- › Locate the following and/or know how to use:
 - ◆ Vehicle registration and/or proof of insurance
 - ◆ Headlights
 - ◆ Hazard lights
 - ◆ Windshield wiper controls
 - ◆ Mirrors
 - ◆ Windows
 - ◆ Jack and spare tire
 - ◆ Child car seat (if necessary)
 - ◆ A trip emergency kit that includes jumper cables, blanket, flashlight, food and water
- › Always check the front and back seats for loose articles. These could become a distraction or cause injury during a sudden stop or incident. Ensure materials placed on passenger seat are secure.
- › Plan the route before proceeding. Program GPS and enable hands-free options for phone if appropriate. Advise manager or co-worker of when and where he or she is going.

- › Have contact information available in case of an emergency.
- › Make the following adjustments to:
 - ◆ Seat: Arms should be at approximately a 90-degree angle at the elbow, sit up as high as driver can so his or her feet comfortably reach pedals and has a good line of sight out front window.
 - ◆ Rear-view and side mirrors.
 - ◆ Seat belt: Upper strap sits diagonally across chest and lower strap crosses upper thighs, not stomach. Ensure belt is not twisted.

WHEN STARTING VEHICLE

The driver should:

- › Check to be sure that no warning lights are signaled.
- › Ensure parking brake is off.
- › Turn on headlights.
- › Double check surroundings.
- › Carefully proceed, obeying laws of the road.

DRIVER READINESS

Taking a pre-trip personal inventory is just as important as the vehicle pre-trip process. A number of factors can influence driving performance. Physical, emotional and mental stressors can negatively affect concentration and reaction time. The following factors should be taken into account before a driver gets behind the wheel.

REST

Fatigue is one of the major contributing factors for car crashes. Tiredness can reduce a driver's awareness, slow reaction time and can cause a driver to overreact to a stressful situation. Drivers should pay attention to the following signs of fatigue and drowsy driving:

- › Difficulty focusing or keeping eyes open
- › Experiencing disconnected or wandering thoughts
- › Difficulty keeping head from nodding
- › Drifting from or jerking back to lane
- › Missing an exit or not remembering last few miles driven

Getting a good night's rest, and maintaining a healthy diet and exercise regimen are some of the ways drivers can combat fatigue and reduce the risk of nodding off behind the wheel.

PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH

Strong emotions may dominate a driver's thoughts, which may affect concentration and quick decision making. Drivers should try to keep peace of mind when operating vehicles. If others are in the vehicle, drivers should avoid strong emotional conversations and arguments.

Physical ailments may also hinder alertness, decision-making abilities and coordination. Individuals should avoid driving with a high fever or other symptoms that may affect concentration and reaction time. Some medications, such as cold and flu treatments, may also adversely affect driving ability. Drivers should follow instructions for medications as prescribed by a physician. They should be aware of any prescribed medications that could also cause drowsiness or fatigue.

APPROPRIATE ATTIRE

Clothing and footwear must be appropriate for road and weather conditions. Shoes with smooth soles or higher heels may slip off the pedals and

create a slipping hazard when entering/exiting the vehicle. Footwear should fit securely to the feet with no open toes or heels.

When driving in cold weather, drivers should have an appropriate coat, hat and hand coverings available in the event of a breakdown or incident. Drivers should pay attention to loose clothing, unsecured long hair and jewelry when operating specialized vehicles, as they may become caught in equipment.

DRUGS AND/OR ALCOHOL

Use of certain drugs and overconsumption of alcohol is prohibited by law and often is restricted according to an organization's personnel policies and rules.



DEFENSIVE DRIVING

Defensive driving goes beyond following traffic laws and procedures. It involves anticipating situations, rather than reacting to them, and making safe, well-informed decisions based on road and environmental conditions. Defensive driving means understanding a vehicle's capabilities and limitations, and maintaining control while maneuvering it away from hazards.

DEFENSIVE DRIVING TRAINING OPTIONS THROUGH MCIT

The defensive driving training offered to members through MCIT is designed for those employees who drive as part of their job duties on behalf of the member organization. MCIT offers two formats for defensive driving classes: on site and online. The options are provided at no charge as part of MCIT membership.

Interactive On-site Classes: MCIT partners with the Minnesota Safety Council for two-hour on-site

DEFENSIVE DRIVING TRAINING AND CONTRIBUTION COSTS

Employees' completion of defensive driving courses does not directly lead to a reduction in a member's automobile coverage contribution. However fewer and less severe claims will have a positive financial impact on the overall expenses for MCIT, which helps lower member contribution rates.

Completion of defensive driving programs potentially could positively affect an individual's personal insurance rates, depending on courses taken and the insurance company's rules.

training. Each on-site session requires a minimum of 10 and a maximum of 30 participants. The programs provide students with written materials, the chance to ask questions and certificates of completion.*

Classes have been tailored to meet members' needs:

- › Experienced Drivers/Passenger Vehicles
- › Maintenance Vehicles/Highway Departments
- › Multiple Passenger Vehicles/Vans and Buses

The curricula include discussions about:

- › Safe driving behavior, practices and strategies
- › Factors that impair safety
- › Specific issues related to city and rural driving
- › The effects of motor vehicle accidents on the employer and employee

Members should contact MCIT Internal Services at info@mcit.org or toll-free **1.866.547.6516** to schedule on-site classes.

MCIT pays for up to two sessions of on-site training for defensive driving per member per year. Additional sessions can be scheduled at a cost to the member. When a member requests two sessions, they must be scheduled for the same day. To cancel an on-site class, members must give five days notice or be subject to a cancellation fee.

Online Video Training: Online defensive driving training is available through a partnership with the Minnesota Safety Council's free streaming video service (MinnesotaSafetyCouncil.org). This is not an interactive course. Here's how it works:

- › Select a defensive driving training video from multiple choices among the streaming videos.
- › Once chosen, assign the video to an individual viewer/employee with a special login. The individual has access to the video for one week.
- › The assigning person can send a quiz to the viewer. This can serve as both a tool to show understanding of the material and give proof the video has been watched and offer a record.

Note: Members looking to provide general safe driving instruction and information to its employees regardless if they drive on behalf of the member for business are referred to the Minnesota Safety Council's options (MinnesotaSafetyCouncil.org/traffic/).

*Certificates of completion are issued to participants; however, members should not confuse the MCIT-sponsored sessions with the four- or eight-hour National Safety Council courses.

DISTRACTED DRIVING

Safe driving requires full attention. It is estimated that a driver makes an average of 200 decisions during every mile he or she drives. Adding unneeded tasks decreases the ability to recognize potential hazards in the road, often causing drivers to react more slowly to traffic conditions. Distracted driving creates serious and unneeded risk.

The following prevention best practices can help minimize the risk of a vehicle collision due to distraction:

- ◆ Plan the route before leaving. Know how traffic and weather conditions might affect the drive. Leaving earlier may help get to the destination with less stress and fewer distracting thoughts.
 - ◆ Finish dressing and personal grooming at home before getting on the road.
 - ◆ Preset the climate control, GPS, radio or other devices; and identify the location of signals, wipers and lights in the vehicle before putting the vehicle in drive.
 - ◆ Before driving, secure loose items and other distractions that could roll around in the car, creating the temptation to reach for them.
 - ◆ While driving, turn off one's mobile phone. Set it on "do not disturb" mode and put the phone in a location to minimize the distraction and temptation of an incoming call or text. If phone use is required while driving, follow Minnesota statutes regarding cell phone use while driving. More information is available from Minnesota Department of Public Safety's website, DPS.mn.gov.
- Although Minnesota law mandates hands-free mobile phone use in vehicles, hands-free devices are not risk-free. They still cause distractions and should be avoided. Use phones only for short, important conversations.
- ◆ Postpone complex or emotional conversations on the phone or with passengers until after arrival at the destination.
 - ◆ If lost or there is a need to make changes to the route, find a safe place to pull off the road to review and reorient.

HAZARDOUS DRIVING CONDITIONS

Some driving factors such as weather and road conditions may be beyond a driver's control. However, a driver can take many steps to reduce greatly the chances of being involved in a motor vehicle incident while driving during adverse weather conditions.

BEFORE TRAVELING

Drivers should include anticipated weather conditions in their travel plans. In addition, they should anticipate what the weather conditions may be for the entire route of travel. If the weather is forecast to turn inclement, drivers should consider postponing travel if possible.

PREVENTING SLIPS AND FALLS WHEN EXITING, ENTERING VEHICLES

When exiting a vehicle, it is important for the individual to be aware of the surrounding pavement or other ground conditions. Stepping out of a vehicle is a significant cause of slip or fall injuries. When a warm shoe or boot contacts a wet, icy, gravel or dirt roadway, a person can suffer an unexpected slip or fall.

When entering or exiting a vehicle on a potentially slippery surface, an individual should consider these best practices:

- ◆ Test footing when getting out of a vehicle by stepping lightly on the ground before putting all of one's weight onto the feet.
- ◆ Use three-points of contact (two hands and one foot or two feet and one hand) and maintain a secure balance.
- ◆ Be aware of areas where a vehicle has been idling for an extended period. The heat from the engine or exhaust can partially melt any ice or snow, leading it to refreeze. This can create areas of ice or other unanticipated slippery conditions.
- ◆ Always wear footwear that is appropriate for the weather conditions; ensure footwear has a good, slip-resistant tread and low heel.

Vehicle occupants should dress appropriately for the existing weather conditions. Having additional clothing along, such as a rain jacket, gloves and winter weather gear, prepares individuals for any possible changes in weather conditions.

Vehicle occupants should wear the appropriate shoes or other footwear that will keep their feet warm and dry. Footwear should also offer good protection against potential slips (good tread and low heels).

The driver should inspect the vehicle to ensure that it is in good operating condition. This includes maintaining a full tank of gas; and adequate oil, coolant and windshield washing fluid levels. Tires should have proper air pressure and not be overly worn. All lights and turn signals should work properly.

The following items can be helpful in the event a vehicle becomes disabled or stalled:

- Jumper cables
- Basic tools
- Sand, cat litter, chicken grit or other abrasive to provide more traction
- Shovel
- Tow rope or chain
- Sleeping bag or blankets
- Road flares or reflectors
- Snow suit and heavy boots

A small weather survival kit is also a good idea to keep stored in a vehicle. The kit should include:

- Small, sharp knife and plastic spoons
- Red bandanna or cloth to tie to the vehicle and attract attention if necessary
- Safety pins
- Whistle
- Cell phone charger
- Plastic flashlight and spare batteries
- Small first-aid kit
- Candles and matches
- Small packages of food that can be eaten hot or cold that last a long time, such as raisins, miniature candy bars, wrapped hard candies and energy or granola bars

DRIVING IN HAZARDOUS WEATHER CONDITIONS

Driving in hazardous or inclement weather conditions requires altering the manner in which one operates a vehicle. Reducing speed, maintaining a greater following distance, and gradual braking allows for better control of the vehicle and greatly reduces the chances of being involved in a motor vehicle crash.

The below driving techniques should be followed when driving in hazardous weather conditions. Drivers should:

- › Reduce speed and increase the distance between them and the vehicle(s) ahead.
- › Not use the vehicle's cruise control. Using cruise control on wet, icy or otherwise slippery roadways greatly enhances the chances of the vehicle skidding or sliding, leading to a loss of control of the vehicle by the driver.
- › Consider keeping headlights on anytime operators are driving but especially during inclement weather conditions even though headlights are required to be used from just before sunset to just after sunrise. The vehicle should be highly visible all of the time to avoid being struck by another auto. Using the headlights low-beam setting when driving in rain or fog may be more effective as the high-beam setting can bounce off of the rain or fog and actually diminish the field of view.
- › Accelerate and decelerate gradually and make any turns slowly to help maintain control of the vehicle. In the event of a skid, the driver should turn the front wheels in the direction the skid, which assists in minimizing the skid and allowing the driver to regain control of the vehicle.
- › Apply constant pressure to the brake pedal if the vehicle has anti-lock brakes and steer in the direction the driver wants to go. If the vehicle does not have anti-lock brakes, the driver should apply a gentle pumping action to the brake pedal, which prevents brakes from seizing and reduces any skidding.
- › Be aware of hydroplaning. Hydroplaning occurs when there is too much water between the tires and the road resulting in the tires losing contact with the road. If the vehicle begins to hydroplane, the driver should ease up on the accelerator and avoid applying the brakes until he or she feels the tires regaining contact with the road. Some factors that contribute to hydroplaning include vehicle speed, tire tread depth and depth of the water on the roadway.
- › Never drive onto flooded roads or into any water of which the driver does not know the precise depth. Never estimate or presume the depth of the water on a roadway. Moving water can be difficult to judge, and even shallow moving water can push or pull a vehicle into or along with it.

STEPS AFTER A CRASH OR VEHICLE BECOMES DISABLED

Being involved in a motor vehicle incident or having a vehicle become disabled can be a troubling and stressful experience for most. Knowing what a driver is required to do by law and what he or she can do to minimize the trauma of the experience can greatly assist in a quick and satisfactory resolution to the event.

Drivers should consider the following if they are involved in a vehicle incident or the vehicle becomes disabled. The driver should:

- › Move the vehicle to the side of the roadway and out of any traffic when it is safe to do so. Drivers should use the vehicle's hazard lights (four-way signals) to alert other traffic.
- › Avoid standing or otherwise being outside of the vehicle, especially when there is traffic present. Staying inside the vehicle offers individuals the best protection against hazards associated with other traffic.
- › Immediately call 911 if anyone has been injured or any other emergency condition exists. The Good Samaritan law in Minnesota only requires that people call 911 for assistance in the event of a medical emergency and not to put themselves or others in danger or to act beyond their skills.
- › Alert the nearest law enforcement agency to report a collision with a deer or other large animal.
- › Remain calm:
 - ◆ If involved in a crash or collision, emergency responders will arrive quickly and assist those involved. Responding law enforcement officers will assist in obtaining information the driver may need for insurance purposes and will help in removing the vehicle from the area.
 - ◆ If the vehicle becomes disabled due to weather conditions or a mechanical failure, emergency responders will assist the driver when they can. The driver should always stay with the vehicle, not attempt to search for help.
- › Keep the radiator and exhaust system of the vehicle clear of any snow, mud or other debris as much as possible. This allows the heat and cooling systems of the vehicle to continue to operate effectively.
- › Maintain fresh air in the vehicle by keeping all windows slightly open. An obstructed vehicle exhaust system can cause deadly carbon monoxide to build up inside the vehicle.
- › Stay awake and ensure any passengers remain awake. Occupants should not expect to be comfortable, as it is better to be cold and awake than to be warm and sleepy.
- › Follow the established personal insurance or employer coverage reporting process.

DEER-VEHICLE COLLISIONS

According to the Minnesota Department of Public Safety, from 2012 through 2018, there were nearly 10,000 deer-vehicle collisions, which resulted in 27 fatalities and approximately 2,000 injuries. Some divisions of member operations, specifically law enforcement, risk a greater exposure than other divisions, given their amount of vehicle use. With increased awareness and use of the following prevention techniques, this risk can be greatly reduced.

PREVENTION AND BEST PRACTICES

Drivers should:

- › Be especially vigilant from late October through November when deer-vehicle collisions peak. This coincides with deer mating season and diminished daylight hours.
- › Increase awareness at dusk and dawn. This is the time when deer are most active.
- › Avoid speeding. Drivers should not drive faster than the time it would take to stop should something appear in the headlights.
- › Go slowly around blind corners or dips and hills on the road where the view ahead is limited.
- › Scan roadside ditches for deer, particularly in forested areas, near river or stream banks, or where deer crossing signs are posted.
- › Slow down when sighting a deer; deer can be unpredictable. They may jump out into the roadway.
- › Look for additional deer if one is sighted. Deer are known to travel in groups and often move in single file.
- › Keep the windshield clean.
- › Always use a seat belt, stay alert and drive sober.

- › Use high beams at night or when driving in low-light conditions while being considerate of other drivers.
- › Do not rely on car-mounted deer whistles, as they are largely ineffective at preventing deer strikes.

WHEN A DEER STRIKE IS UNAVOIDABLE

Hitting the deer with a controlled vehicle is often the safest option. To maintain control as much as possible when hitting a deer, the driver should:

- › Keep hands firmly on the wheel.
- › Not swerve. Swerving to avoid a deer can lead to a loss of control. It can also put the vehicle into the path of oncoming traffic or a roadside object.

After hitting a deer, the driver should follow the best practices outlined in the “Steps after a Crash or Vehicle Becomes Disabled” section on the previous page. The driver and any occupants should not move the deer themselves. The task may be dangerous due to traffic or the weight and awkward lifting required when moving the animal.



RESOURCES TO HELP REDUCE HAZARDS, IMPROVE SAFETY RELATED TO DRIVING

- ♦ **Quick Takes on Safety** ([MCIT.org/quick-takes-on-safety/](https://www.mcit.org/quick-takes-on-safety/)): Mini training scripts and employee hand-outs that cover a variety of vehicle and fleet topics.
- ♦ **Minnesota Safety Council** ([MinnesotaSafetyCouncil.org](https://www.MinnesotaSafetyCouncil.org)) and **National Safety Council** ([NSC.org](https://www.NSC.org)): All MCIT members have a membership with the Minnesota Safety Council as part of MCIT membership.
- ♦ **Step Wisely** ([MCIT.org/step-wisely/](https://www.mcit.org/step-wisely/)), a slip, trip and fall prevention program, includes materials alerting employees to the slip hazard of entering or exiting vehicles and walking in snowy and icy parking areas.
- ♦ **Deer collision prevention materials** ([MCIT.org/deer-collision-prevention/](https://www.mcit.org/deer-collision-prevention/)): Using these materials during the peak deer movement months of October through November can be a timely reminder and help reduce deer-vehicle collisions.

BACKING INTO INCIDENTS

MCIT receives many backing-into damage claims for vehicles. These claims often stem from a lack of awareness of obstacles behind a vehicle and from reduced rear sight lines prevalent in many law enforcement vehicles.

When adding equipment to a squad car or other vehicle, members should make sure to review sight lines and determine how visibility through the rear window will be affected with the addition(s).

Supervisors should educate employees about the following best practices when backing up a vehicle:

- › Periodically inspect back-up equipment if equipped (cameras, warning alarms) to ensure that they are in good working condition.
- › Back in to a parking space or driveway when possible to increase visibility when departing. Whenever possible, pull through a parking spot to allow for forward movement when leaving.
- › Conduct a “circle of safety” around the vehicle before getting behind the wheel whenever possible. This simply involves doing a 360-degree walk around the vehicle to ensure the area is safe before departing.
- › Ongoing refresher instruction may be required.

INCIDENT INVESTIGATIONS

All crashes and incidents involving vehicles should be reviewed and investigated to determine the underlying causes that contributed to the incident. The information gathered in these investigations should be used to identify corrective actions that can be implemented to help prevent future incidents. The investigation should be conducted with the purpose of determining root causes; blame should not be part of the process.

AUTOMOBILE ACCIDENT REVIEW COMMITTEES

Some organizations have established an automobile accident review committee. This committee typically meets monthly or on a regular basis and serves to determine whether specific automobile accidents were preventable.

The committee determines preventability using a number of resources it has deemed admissible, such as internal investigation reports, driver accident and police reports, witness statements and other available evidence. Disciplinary consequences typically follow a preventable accident finding.

An automobile accident review committee has some potential trappings, however. Whereas a traditional employee accident/incident investigation process attempts to determine the root cause of an incident, an automobile accident review committee generally makes a ruling on preventability. This could result in employees underreporting incidents or not being forthright in details, which does not contribute to the goal of preventing future incidents.

In addition, employees could perceive that the committee is inconsistent in application, findings and consequences. This could lead to potential morale and employment issues. Attention needs to be given to union and other legal considerations, as well as ongoing training of committee members.

If considering forming a committee, an organization’s written policy should direct the committee’s responsibilities and authority. A committee must be established and operated under the guidance of the human resources department and legal counsel.

All incident reviews should be conducted with the privacy of the involved employees and data practices regulations in mind. All information that could reveal the identity of these employees should be redacted before given to a committee or others to review.

REDUCE HAZARDS, IMPROVE SAFETY CHECKUP

ITEM	YES	NO	ACTION ITEM
Do all commercial vehicles carry the following equipment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fire extinguisher that has a UL rating of 5B:C or equivalent? • Spare fuses? • Appropriate warning devices for stopped vehicles? 			
Do employees use a checklist to perform a pre-trip vehicle assessment?			
Are employees trained about driver readiness best practices (rest, health, appropriate attire, etc.)?			
Are employees trained about defensive driving techniques (either in-person or virtual training)?			
Are employees trained about loss prevention best practices related to hazardous driving conditions?			
Are employees trained about steps to take after a motor vehicle incident?			
Are fleet vehicles equipped with basic weather survival kits?			
Are employees aware of and follow best practices to avoid deer-vehicle collisions?			
Do drivers walk around the vehicle to spot hazards or obstructions before departing?			
Are vehicle backup cameras and/or alarms unobstructed and functioning?			
Are mobile phones and other distractions prohibited or minimized when driving?			
Are employees trained about slip and fall prevention when entering and exiting vehicles?			