

Top Driving Tips to Avoid Accidents

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Accidents happen to most of us at one time or the other, and while these are sometimes unavoidable, many traffic accidents can be prevented if drivers concentrate on what they are supposed to be doing when they are behind the wheel.

We all need reminding, so here are some great tips to help you and your drivers avoid getting into a traffic accident, and thereby save lives, time and money!!

1. **Do not multi-task – keep your eyes on the road**
It is hard to believe but there are drivers who brush their hair, put on make-up and even shave when they are driving! This is not a good idea. When you are driving, you should be doing just that and nothing else. If you are not concentrating solely on your driving you are risking an accident, because you will not be prepared for anything that is up ahead.
2. **Never drink and drive!**
Alcohol is one of the biggest causes of accidents in South Africa each year. An international survey undertaken in 2015 revealed that South Africa had the highest number of drunk driving incidents at 58%. When you are drinking, you do not have the same abilities that you do when you are sober, and that includes the ability to drive safely. Both your judgement and your vision will be impaired.

If you are caught drunk driving you will pay the price. You could be held in custody until bail is posted, you could face a minimum fine of R2 000 or a two year prison sentence or both, and you could also lose your licence. And you will have a criminal record with all the negative implications for your family and career for the rest of your life.



3. Cell phones are taboo!

Cell phone distraction rates whilst driving are alarmingly high. South Africa has one of the highest road accident rates in the world, with around 25% of those accidents caused by cell phone use while driving. Smartphones have made it easy for us to stay connected at all times, but this can pose a serious safety risk if you decide to check your text messages, emails, phone calls or any other mobile applications whilst driving. Even just talking on a cell phone is extremely distracting. Put the phone away, and make sure it is turned off so you don't have the urge to answer it if it rings. If you do need to make a call, wait until you are parked before doing so.

4. Pre-set your music/radio channels

Make sure that you do not have to change CD's, playlists, and radio stations while you are driving. Changing your communication channels will mean you have to take your eyes off the road, even for a second or two, and this is when accidents can happen. Only change your communication channel when your vehicle is parked.

5. Follow the speed limit

Speeding is another major cause of accidents. The severity of a crash increases with speed. If you speed, you might not be able to stop in time - with a reaction time of one second, it will take the average driver, driving at 110 km/h, about 90m to come to a stop on a dry surface. If you are going faster, it will take longer. And remember, you are not only endangering yourself by speeding – you are also putting pedestrians and other drivers at risk.

6. Avoid reckless driving - follow all the rules of the road

Just like speed limits, there are other rules of the road that must be followed if you want to avoid having accidents. Stop at red lights and stop signs, watch out for warning signs for potholes and other hazards, drive more slowly when it is raining, drive with lights on as soon as the light fades, etc. Remember, a driver who habitually runs a red light, drives in the emergency lane or overtakes on a barrier line is a crash waiting to happen.



7. **Ignore aggressive drivers.**
Some of our drivers are extremely aggressive and unpleasant and we have all encountered drivers who speed, tailgate or cut other drivers off. It can be extremely intimidating and the best thing to do in a case like this is to try and get out of their way as quickly as possible. If they are crawling up behind you flashing their lights, slow down to let them pass. Don't play games and make them angrier. The quicker you can get them away from you, the safer you will be.
8. **Eliminate bad habits and buckle up!**
We all develop bad habits over time. Most drivers forget not only the rules of the road, but also that the correct seating position is the foundation of good driving. Most drivers sit either too far or too close to the steering wheel, which impairs their ability to control the vehicle in the event of an emergency and also limits the effectiveness of the seat belt. So check your seating position, and remember, always buckle up, even if you are just going to the shop around the corner!
9. **Drive a safe vehicle**
Vehicle safety is important - driving a vehicle that has safety features like airbags and antilock brakes may assist in avoiding accidents. Also ensure that your vehicle is serviced as per the OEM specification and that tyre pressures are maintained, also as recommended by the OEM.
10. **Avoid driving when you are sick or stressed**
Driving requires concentration and focus on the road. If you are unwell, fatigued or stressed it will affect your decisions. Lack of concentration and focus may lead to a slower reaction time, while being overworked, stressed and exhausted increases the chance of you falling asleep at the wheel. Avoid long distance driving if you are tired, stressed or unwell.



11. Be cautious during bad weather

Visibility is reduced significantly during bad weather which may result in bad judgement, particularly when it concerns the distance between vehicles.

SLOW DOWN! Slowing down is the safest option particularly during heavy rain and fog - do not attempt to overtake in bad weather conditions.

We at Eqstra Fleet Management would like to wish you a safe festive season and a prosperous 2019.

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