

## Driving Emergencies

A defensive driver is prepared for anything! This document introduces eight driving emergency scenarios and provides you with some techniques on what you can do to try to prevent a collision.

### Scenario #1: Your Brakes Fail

You step on the brake – and the pedal slaps uselessly on the floor. It is a terrifying experience!

1. **If there is any resistance**, pump the pedal. You may be able to work up enough pressure to help a little.
2. **If there is no pressure** and the way ahead is clear, coast in the drive gear and use the parking brake. If you need to slow faster, shift into a lower forward gear and let engine compression help.
3. **On a hill or mountain grade**, you are in trouble. Look for something to sideswipe – roadside brush, a snow bank, a guardrail, and even parked vehicles.
4. **Use your horn or lights** to warn other drivers and pedestrians that you are experiencing a problem.

### Scenario # 2: You Go into a Skid

Abrupt turns, sudden lane changes or hard braking can throw you into a dangerous skid, especially on wet or icy roads.

1. If your vehicle starts to slide, **take your foot off the gas**. Never hit the brakes during a skid correction.
2. **Do not turn hard away from the direction of the skid!** This may be your first instinct, but may cause an accident or collision.
3. Instead, **turn your wheels in the same direction the rear of the vehicle is skidding**. But be careful about it – do not over steer. You will be able to "feel" when the vehicle regains rolling traction; when this happens, straighten the wheels.
4. **Threshold braking** is the fastest way to stop with the least chance of skidding. It is done by squeezing the brake and getting maximum stopping without locking the wheels. Threshold braking is difficult to do every time, particularly in a panic situation. You may need to release and reapply brake pressure.
5. If you have **Anti-Lock Braking System (ABS)**, **DO NOT pump the brakes** .

Remember that front wheel drive vehicles, four-wheel drive vehicles, and rear wheel drive vehicles respond differently to skids.

### Scenario # 3: You Are Too Sleepy To Go On

If you find that you are too tired to continue driving, you should:

1. Stop at the **first safe place**. Open two or more windows slightly, lock all doors.
2. **Rest**. If possible, sleep for 30 minutes or more, then **drink coffee** if available.

3. When you resume driving, keep some **windows** open, play the **radio**, chew **gum**, **sing**, and keep your **eyes moving**.
4. **Stop for a good rest** at the first opportunity.

#### Scenario # 4: Your accelerator sticks

You let up on the gas pedal and nothing happens. Keep cool – this is one of the easiest of driving emergencies to handle.

1. If you are on the open highway and there is plenty of room ahead, **try to pull the pedal up with the toe of your shoe** or have a front seat passenger do it.
2. **Do not reach down yourself** and take your attention from the road.
3. If there is not time, **shift the vehicle to neutral and/or depress the clutch, brake** to a stop and **turn off the ignition**.

#### Scenario #5: You have a tire blow-out

A tire blow-out can lead to devastating results, but you must remain calm.

1. Keep a **firm and steady grip** on the steering wheel – do not over steer to correct the swerve or pull. If a front tire goes, there will be a strong pull toward the side with the blow out. A rear blow out tends to cause weaving of the back of the vehicle.
2. Above all, **do not slam on the brakes!** You must maintain or regain steering control before braking. To help maintain steering control, a slight acceleration usually helps to stabilize the vehicle.
3. **Brake smoothly** – but easy does it. Sudden braking may throw you into a spin.
4. Get onto the shoulder and find a place level enough to change the tire safely. Day or night, set out flares or other warning devices and turn on the flashers.

#### Scenario # 6: Your headlights go out

There is only one thing to do if your headlights go out and you are suddenly plunged into darkness:

1. Hold a **straight steering course** and **brake as hard as you can** without throwing the vehicle into a skid. Then ease onto the shoulder as far from a traffic lane as you can get. The idea is to pull your speed down quickly before a slight steering error takes you off the road.
2. Once stopped, **set out flares or use a flashlight** to warn oncoming traffic. Use the four-way flashers if they are operable.

If everything is dead – radio, blower, interior lights, etc. – the problem is probably the battery cables. Check the terminals.

#### Scenario # 7: You must stop on a highway:

1. On an **expressway with paved shoulders**, signal and pull off at near traffic speed, then slow down.

2. Where the **shoulder is unpaved**, signal and slow down to a safe speed before turning off.
3. Leave **low-beam headlights** on in dusk, darkness or bad weather; turn on interior lights and four-way flashers if you have them.
4. **If you must stop close to a traffic lane, on a curve, over a hill or in any risky location**, get everyone out of the vehicle and well away from traffic. Never obscure taillights at night by standing or working behind the vehicle.
5. Day or night, place a **flare or other warning device** just behind the vehicle and another at least 100 metres back (that is about 120 paces).
6. Raise the **hood** and tie a **white handkerchief** to the antenna or left door handle as a signal if help is needed.

### **Scenario # 8: You need a doctor**

If you find yourself driving and suddenly in need of a doctor, you should:

1. Observe speed limits but hurry to the **nearest town**.
2. Flash your headlights at any **police vehicle** you see along the way, then pull over and park. The officer will escort you.
3. Without such help **look for a policeman** as you drive into town, or stop at the first drugstore and ask directions to the nearest hospital, clinic or doctor.
4. At the hospital, look for the **EMERGENCY** sign and drive directly to that entrance.