

Prepare on the Road

Safe Summer Travel

Keep it slow, Keep it smooth

Whether you're heading out on a weekend road trip, planning an extended family vacation or waking a four-wheeled friend from its long winter's nap, you'll want to make sure the summer driving season brings maximum enjoyment and minimum stress. Before you pack up the car, keep these simple safety tips in mind:

- Tend to your tires - Exchange your winter tires for summer or all-season tires. Winter tires wear out quickly on dry, hot pavement; switching them early will keep them in optimum shape for next year, not to mention improve your car's handling during the summer months.
- Check your tire pressure - Most cars have a decal mounted in their driver doorjamb that lists the correct tire pressures depending on the tire size and vehicle load. Properly inflated tires will also improve fuel economy.
- Stay on top of your fluids - If you've fallen behind on maintenance, get your car's oil changed before you hit the road. Check the coolant/antifreeze mixture inside your vehicle's radiator. The ideal ratio of coolant to water is 50-to-50 for both cold and hot weather.
- Prepare an emergency car kit - Here are some recommended items:
 - A flashlight, flares and a first-aid kit
 - Jumper cables
 - A mat or blanket just in case you need to get under the vehicle for repairs
 - Extra clothes and gloves
 - Paper towels
 - Extra washer fluid
 - Nonperishable food
 - Jug of water
 - Basic tools (wrenches, ratchet/socket set, screwdrivers, pliers or Vise-Grips, etc.)

Many of these items are available (often prepackaged) at auto parts stores or major department stores. Also, keep the phone number for your emergency roadside assistance program in a convenient location.

- Avoid fatigue - Drowsy driving is one of the leading causes of highway accidents. There are a few measures you can take to avoid getting tired on the road:
 - Get plenty of rest before spending a lot of time on the road
 - Be mindful of caffeine; a short-term coffee buzz will be followed by a lull, and it is impossible to sustain one's energy for hours on end.
 - Switch drivers every hour or two if you can.
 - Stop often.
- Tow with safety in mind - Keep it slow, keep it smooth. When towing, everything you do while driving needs to be done at a significantly reduced speed when compared to driving without a trailer. Plan all maneuvers well ahead of time and be especially cautious when towing in windy conditions.
- Be nice - Consider this: you're tired, other drivers are tired, and highway driving (especially with little ones) can be shorten our collective fuses, making road rage all too common on our interstates.
 - Use your signals
 - Let faster driver pass
 - Don't tailgate
 - Be patient with trucks and RVs

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