

Best Practice Guide

Driving At Night



Open Your Eyes To The Dark

Driving at night is much more challenging than driving in the day. It is more difficult to see in the dark, and therefore it is more difficult to spot hazards at night. For this reason, it is particularly important that you watch your speed at night and make sure you look out for potentially dangerous situations.

There are a number of steps you can take to cut the risks when driving at night.

Don't Skip Sleep

Sleep is vital for the human body to function properly, so if you are an on-call or shift worker who regularly drives during the night you must make sure that when you sleep, you are getting good quality sleep.

Some useful tips are:

- Get as much sleep as you would at night.
- Prevent distractions such as phone calls and disturbances from family members.
- Avoid caffeine, sleeping pills, alcohol and nicotine before going to bed.
- Maintain a regular sleep schedule, even on days off.

Watch For Tiredness

You are more likely to experience fatigue when driving at night, so it is important that you look out for the warning signs. Even though you might not realise you are tired, your driving performance is a good indicator of how alert you are. Warning signs of tiredness include:

- Your vehicle veering over the white lines.
- Varying your speed for no reason.
- Heavy eyelids.
- Frequent blinking.
- Frequent yawning.
- Feeling fidgety or irritable.
- Daydreaming.

Take Regular Breaks

Driving at night can be particularly tiring, so make sure you take regular breaks to give your eyes a rest. Stop for a minimum of 15 minutes every two hours, and more frequently if you notice symptoms of tiredness. Getting some fresh air and stretching your legs can help you to feel refreshed.

Widen The Gap

Visibility is poorer at night, and because of this you should drive at a safe speed and increase your following distance when driving in the dark. It is harder to see hazards such as pedestrians, broken down vehicles or wild animals in the dark but you have a much greater chance of being able

to stop or get out of the way if you are travelling at a safe speed and a safe distance away from other vehicles.

Help Your Eyes

Dusk is a difficult time for driving, as your eyes have to constantly adapt to the increasing darkness. In the dark, your depth perception, colour recognition and side vision are all affected.

To help your vision:

- Turn on headlights at dusk, one hour before it goes dark also keep them on for one hour after sunrise.
- Avoid driving at sunset if possible as the light can be blinding.
- Have regular eyesight checks and wear glasses or lenses if you need them.
- Consider an anti-reflection coating on glasses to reduce headlight glare.

Plan Your Route

Because it is more difficult to see at night, you should make sure you know your route before starting out on a journey. Study maps or directions carefully before setting off. Look carefully for road signs while driving as they are more difficult to see at night.

Prepare Your Vehicle

As well as preparing yourself for night driving, you should also prepare your vehicle.

At least once a week you should clean:

- Headlights.
- Taillights.
- Indicators.
- Windows.

Make sure your headlights are aimed properly as misaimed headlights can reduce your ability to see the road ahead in the dark, and can also dazzle other drivers.

Make sure windscreen wipers work properly and keep the wash wipe level topped up.

Avoid Alcohol

You should never drink alcohol when driving, but it is especially important that you do not consume even a drop of alcohol when driving at night, as you are more likely to be tired. If you are feeling sleepy, even a very small amount of alcohol can magnify this sleepiness and increase your risk of crashing, even if you are well below the legal limit.

Look For Night Hazards

Driving at night brings with it additional dangers, including night-time specific hazards. Crashes involving alcohol are about five times more likely to occur at night, so even if you haven't drunk any alcohol, driving at night puts you at an increased risk of being involved in an alcohol-related crash.

Look out for:

- Impaired drivers who are likely to be speeding up and slowing down for no reason or driving erratically.
- Drunken pedestrians.
- Wild animals.



Park With Care

If you need to park on a road at night, you should park:

- In the same direction as the traffic. Only park against the flow if you are in a marked parking space.
- In a well-lit area.
- At least 10 metres from a junction.

Avoid parking:

- In quiet or isolated areas.
- Close to walls, high fences or vegetation, where an attacker could hide.

- N** Never skip sleep.
- I** It is essential to take regular breaks.
- G** Get some fresh air during breaks from driving.
- H** Hazards such as drunk drivers, pedestrians and wild animals.
- T** Turn on headlights an hour before dusk.

- T** Try to plan your route before driving at night.
- I** It is necessary to leave a larger following distance at night.
- M** Maintain your vehicle.
- E** Even a drop of alcohol is dangerous.

WARNING

If you smoke in your vehicle, nicotine and carbon monoxide from the smoke can hamper your vision so avoid smoking while you drive, particularly at night.