

Best Practice Guide

Intersections



Get It Right At Intersections

Intersections (or 'junctions') are among the most hazardous places on the road and a common location for crashes.

Collisions at intersections usually occur when a driver fails to stop, fails to check properly before pulling onto a highway, fails to manoeuvre correctly or fails to obey the rules of the road. In other words, intersection collisions are usually caused by driver error.

Several incident prevention techniques can help to prevent intersection collisions.

Watch Your Speed

Help to reduce your chances of causing a collision by slowing down gradually on the approach to an intersection, rather than slamming on your brakes at the last minute. Slowing down early will not only prevent you from rear-ending others but will also give drivers behind you plenty of warning that you are coming to a stop. Remember the three S's of braking: Slowly, Smoothly and Steadily.

Mind Your Gap

When coming to a stop behind other vehicles at an intersection ensure you leave a safe distance by following the 'tyres and tarmac' rule. You should be able to see the rear tyres of the vehicle in front AND tarmac behind the tyres.

This helps to:

- Prevent you from rear-ending others.
- Provide a 'get-out' space if you think a vehicle is about to rear-end you.
- Prevent you from becoming 'squashed' in the middle of two vehicles in the event of a vehicle hitting you from behind.



Watch Your Back

To reduce your chances of being hit in the rear at an intersection:

- Leave a safe gap in front of your vehicle.
- Stay in first gear.

- Keep your foot on the brake pedal so your brake lights are visible to other drivers.
- Check your rear-view mirror frequently.
- Drive into your safety space if necessary.

Don't Move Too Fast

Many intersection collisions are caused when a driver is waiting behind another vehicle, notices a safe gap in traffic, assumes the vehicle in front will have moved, then sets off only to rear-end the vehicle in front which has not yet pulled out. Always double check that the vehicle in front has moved before setting off.



Triple Check Before Emerging

Effective observation is a crucial skill at intersections. A quick glance before pulling out is not enough! When you reach the front of an intersection you should first look in the direction of the traffic nearest to you. If you drive on the left the pattern should be 'right-left-right'. If you drive on the right the pattern should be 'left-right-left'. Only enter the flow of traffic when you are 100% sure it is safe to do so.

Drive Defensively

Defensive drivers are always prepared for the actions of other road users at intersections.

To drive defensively:

- Approach intersections with caution.
- Never assume that other vehicles will stop or let you go.

- Never assume that another vehicle will do something until it actually does it - for example even if a vehicle is indicating to turn, do not move until the vehicle actually begins to turn.

Look Out For Hidden Hazards

Intersections are usually located in busy areas where there are many potential hazards.

Look for hidden hazards, such as:

- A vehicle emerging from a side road.
- A pedestrian stepping into the road.
- A child emerging from behind a parked car.
- A cyclist who might be approaching faster than you expect.



Think Bike

Most crashes between motor vehicles and motorbikes occur at intersections, usually when a vehicle emerges into the path of a motorcyclist. One of the reasons for drivers failing to see motorcycles is that they are not as visible as other vehicles.

Remember:

- Bikes may be 'hidden' from sight by a tree or another vehicle.
- Motorcycles may be travelling faster than you think and you may have less time than you realise to pull out from a junction.
- If you see a motorbike approaching but are unsure of its speed, wait for it to pass before pulling out.

- I** Intersections can be hazardous places to drive.
- N** Never make assumptions about the actions of other drivers.
- T** Treat intersections with extreme caution.
- E** Emerge only when 100% sure it is safe to do so.
- R** Reduce your chances of being rear-ended by leaving a safety space.
- S** Slow down smoothly and steadily.
- E** Ensure you know what is happening all around you.
- C** Check your rear-view mirror frequently.
- T** Think bike.
- I** Intersections are often filled with hidden hazards.
- O** Observation is crucial.
- N** Never set off before checking the vehicle in front has moved.

WARNING

More than 50% of fatal or injury crashes occur at intersections, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration in the USA.