

Best Practice Guide

Country Driving



Wise Up On Country Roads

Drivers don't always realize how dangerous country roads can be and often think it is safe to drive faster on rural roads.

Yet statistically the worst crashes, which result in death or life-changing injury, are more likely to occur on fast, single lane carriageways.

A number of collision avoidance techniques can help reduce your chances of having a rural road crash.

Slow Down

It is particularly important to watch your speed on country roads due to the types of hazards you are likely to encounter. Country roads often have lots of blind bends and high hedges, meaning your visibility is likely to be limited. Other hazards include pot holes, concealed entrances and debris on the road which might have fallen from farm vehicles.

Keep Your Distance

When driving on any road you must remember the three-second rule, but this is even more crucial on country roads. Remember that a driver in front may not be able to see very far ahead and may have to stop suddenly for an unexpected hazard.



Look For Others

Look out for vulnerable road users such as pedestrians, children and cyclists. Country roads rarely have a path so these road users will usually have no choice but to use the same space as drivers.

Remember:

- Vulnerable road users are smaller and more difficult to see.
- Never allow yourself to become agitated with other road users.
- Everyone has an equal right to be on the road.
- Children may not be familiar with the dangers of the road.

Mind The Animals

It is common to encounter animals when driving on country roads.

Remember:

- Take care if you see animals in the road and wait patiently for them to move.
- Slow right down when approaching horses and be particularly cautious if there is a group of two or more riders as this indicates that some of the riders are inexperienced.
- To overtake horses go very slowly and leave plenty of room.
- Never sound your horn close to horses as this could startle an animal and cause it to bolt into the road.

Beware Of Other Drivers

Too many drivers use country roads as an opportunity to push themselves to the limit and drive recklessly. Because of this your chances of encountering a dangerous driver are high.

Stay safe by:

- Looking out for drivers exceeding the speed limit.
- Looking out for drunk drivers who use country roads as an attempt to avoid encountering the police.
- Driving at a safe speed to help ensure that you can get out of the way if it looks like another road user could be putting you at risk.

Think Twice About Overtaking

Overtaking is a very risky maneuver especially on country roads. You are always going to find yourself on the 'wrong side of the road' for at least a few seconds and therefore have to be 100% sure that nothing is coming the other way.

Slow Right Down For Bends

When approaching a blind bend the best thing to assume is that there is a hazard round the corner. Thinking like this will make sure you always slow down to an appropriate speed on the approach to a bend.

Take Extra Care At Night

Night-time driving requires extra precautions.

At night:

- Drive even slower as you will not be able to see animals, pedestrians or cyclists in the road until you are much closer to them.
- You can be temporarily blinded by the lights of an oncoming vehicle especially if they have their full beam on and forget to "dip" their lights. If this happens you should slow down and try not to look straight into the lights but instead try to glance slightly towards the edge of the road (to the side away from the other vehicle), making sure you do not take your eyes off the road ahead. Never make the mistake of flashing the other driver with your lights as this only reflects the light and makes the glare worse for you.

Watch The Weather

Bad weather, particularly snow and ice, makes driving on rural roads even more dangerous. Roads become more slippery in these conditions and are not as likely to be treated by gritting vehicles as inner-city roads. Snow is also likely to affect rural roads for longer as it will usually have more chance to settle due to there being fewer vehicles using the road.

Other conditions such as heavy rain and fog reduce visibility further on rural roads, so it is really important that you slow right down in these conditions.

- C** Consider vulnerable road users.
- O** Overtaking is a dangerous maneuver - avoid it!
- U** Use extreme caution in bad weather.
- N** Never follow other vehicles too closely.
- T** Take care around animals.
- R** Remember to slow right down for bends.
- Y** You need to take extra care at night.

WARNING

There is often only one car involved in crashes on rural roads, indicating that the driver has pushed themselves over the limit and lost control of their vehicle.