

Best Practice Guide

Head-On Collisions



Look Ahead

A head-on collision is one in which the front end of 2 vehicles collide.

Fatalities occur frequently in this type of collision, mainly due to the fact that the impact speed is a combination of the speed of both vehicles. In other words a head-on collision of 2 vehicles travelling at 60 mph / 96 kph is roughly equivalent to a vehicle hitting a stationary object at 120 mph / 193 kph.

Head-on collisions are usually the result of 'lane-departure incidents', where a vehicle moves from its original lane into a lane of oncoming traffic. This may be intentional (for example, if the driver is overtaking) or unintentional (such as if the driver loses control on a bend).

A number of incident prevention techniques can help to reduce your chances of being involved in a head-on collision.

Take Corners With Care

Head-on collisions often occur when drivers lose control on a bend or take a corner too wide.

To corner safely:

- Slow down smoothly and gradually on the approach to a corner before turning the steering wheel.
- Keep close to the inside of your lane.
- Maintain a constant (not fast) speed as you turn.
- Accelerate gently as you start to come out of the turn.



If In Doubt, Do Not Overtake

Overtaking another road user is one of the most dangerous manoeuvres you can do on the road as it requires you to enter a lane of oncoming traffic. Never overtake on a bend or close to a junction and never assume it is safe to overtake just because the vehicle in front has done.

Ask yourself:

- Do I really need to overtake?
- Can I clearly see the road ahead?
- Are there any oncoming vehicles?
- Is there a safe gap in which to pull into after overtaking?

Think Big

Overtaking any vehicle or road user is dangerous but overtaking a large vehicle puts you at even greater risk of a head-on collision due to the

additional time it takes to pass. Only overtake if you are 100% sure you can pass the vehicle and get back into the lane in front safely.

Take Care When Passing

There are times when you will have no option but to enter a lane of oncoming traffic - such as if a vehicle has broken down in the carriageway or an obstruction is blocking a section of the road.

In situations like these:

- Approach the obstruction with caution.
- Signal your intentions.
- Wait for a safe gap in which to pass.
- Leave plenty of space when passing.
- Pass the obstruction quickly, but without speeding.
- Re-enter your original lane as soon as it is safe to do so.



Look High

Always look ahead by at least 12 -15 seconds so that you are aware of what is happening in the distance. This can help you to determine whether you are about to encounter any obstructions in the road and whether the vehicle in front is likely to slow down.

Drivers who are unaware of what is happening in front of them may have to brake suddenly or swerve out of the way of a hazard - but in doing so are likely to put themselves in the line of oncoming traffic. Make sure you can anticipate the road ahead so you can remain in complete control of your vehicle at all times.

Get Your Sleep

Tired drivers are more likely to fall asleep at the wheel or experience 'micro sleeps' where they nod off for just a few seconds at a time. While a driver has his or her eyes closed it is easy for them to drift out of their lane and into oncoming traffic.

Make sure you:

- Get enough sleep every night.
- Don't drive when feeling sleepy.
- Pull up as soon as it is safe to do so if you begin to feel tired while driving.



Don't Be Distracted

Anything that requires you to look away from the road ahead while driving is a distraction and can result in you drifting out of your driving lane without realising.

While on the move avoid:

- Changing the CD or programming the radio.
- Using a mobile phone to speak or send text messages.
- Eating and drinking.
- Anything else that distracts you from driving.

- H** Hazards and obstructions should be passed with extreme care.
- E** Ensure you know what is happening well ahead.
- A** Avoid driving when tired.
- D** Drive with extreme care on corners.

- O** Overtake only if it is 100% safe to do so.
- N** Never allow yourself to be distracted.

WARNING

Head-on crashes are more likely to result in death than any other kind of collision.