

## **Drive to Conditions Traffic Safety Campaign**

### **TxDOT Driver Safety Tips**

Texas is the nation's second-largest state, stretching 790 miles from the Panhandle to the Gulf of Mexico and 773 miles from the Louisiana border to El Paso. Crisscrossing the state's more than 79,000 miles of roadways can take a motorist through not only varying landscapes but also a wide variety of weather conditions, sometimes in a single day, which can present unique challenges and dangers for drivers.

In 2012, the number of Texas motor vehicle traffic fatalities totaled 3,399. That marked a 10.8 percent increase over those in 2011. In 2012, 63,610 serious injury crashes occurred in Texas with 87,087 people sustaining serious injuries.

Motorists should prepare for any type of driving condition they might encounter as they travel around the state. That includes not only heavy traffic and road construction work zones but also the state's ever-changing weather. A motorist traveling from Houston to Dallas in winter might encounter everything from partly cloudy skies to heavy rain, fog or even snow and ice.

TxDOT is reminding motorists to adjust their driving to road conditions. Below are some tips to help drivers adapt to common Texas road conditions. Remember to listen to weather forecasts, and before starting any trip, check Texas highway conditions at <http://www.drivetexas.org>. In addition to these tips, wearing a seatbelt is one of the best steps drivers and passengers can take to protect themselves in any driving condition.

#### **Tips for Driving in Heavy Rain/Flood-Prone Areas**

- Be cautious when traveling through flood-prone areas. Flash floods can come rapidly and unexpectedly—within a few minutes or hours of excessive rainfall. Flash flooding is common in many areas of Texas, especially the Texas Hill Country.
- Turn on your headlights and slow down, allowing extra distance for braking.
- Never attempt to drive through flooded roadways. Water covering roadways may hide washed-out bridges or gouged-out roadbeds, and even in relatively shallow water, tires can act as flotation devices, lifting up big vehicles and sending them downstream. It takes only two feet of water to float a 3,000-pound car.

#### **Tips for Driving in Fog**

- Slow down and do not drive faster than your field of vision. Use windshield wipers and defroster as necessary to maximize visibility.
- Increase following distance to ensure enough reaction time and stopping distance. When you use your brakes, don't stop suddenly.
- Turn on your lights, including your hazard lights. Use low beam headlights and fog lights if you have them. Do not use high beams.

- Use the right edge of the road or roadside reflectors as a guide. If you cannot see, pull completely off the road—preferably at a rest area or truck stop—and turn on your hazard flashers immediately.

### **Tips for Driving in Winter Weather**

- Drive slowly, with cruise control turned off and using smooth steering movements. It's harder to control or stop your vehicle on a slick or snow-covered surface.
- Increase your following distance enough so you'll have plenty of time to stop for vehicles ahead of you.
- Accelerate and brake gently. When you brake, begin braking early, checking behind you, when approaching intersections or stops, and use slow, steady strokes to test traction.
- Approach bridges, shaded spots and turns slowly, and use extra caution on bridges, ramps, overpasses and shaded areas, as they tend to freeze first. If you find yourself in a skid, stay calm and ease your foot off the gas while carefully steering in the direction you want the front of your vehicle to go.

### **Tips for Driving in Heavy Traffic**

- Don't tailgate or flash your lights at another driver. Maintain a safe distance from other drivers, so you can stop within the available stopping distance.
- If an accident is to blame for the traffic congestion, do not slow down and survey the scene as you pass by it.
- Keep to the same lane. When vehicles constantly change lanes, the flow of traffic is repeatedly interrupted, preventing the possibility of a consistent pace.
- Stay focused on driving. Don't use the slow momentum as an opportunity to multi-task or check e-mail.

For more information, visit [www.txdot.gov](http://www.txdot.gov) and search the keywords "Driving to Conditions." And check us out on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/TxDOT>.