IMPORTANT: Even if the vehicle you are operating has one or more air bags, use your safety belt. The air bag is designed to work in tandem with the safety belt to slow the car's occupant down in the event of a collision. Failure to use a safety belt could result in injury to the occupant from the air bag.

a. Safety Belts:

(i) When Required: All front seat occupants of passenger motor vehicles manufactured in 1964 or thereafter are required by law to use safety belts. Operators of buses are also required to use a safety belt. A safety belt or a child restraint system must secure children between four (4) years of age and twelve (12) years of age.

(ii) Exceptions:

(A) Persons who, for medical reasons (and must carry the medical statement from a doctor), should not wear a safety belt;

(B) Certain commercial, postal and newspaper carriers who have to make frequent stops to deliver goods and services;

(C) BMV Driver Examiners while conducting a drive test.

b. Child Restraint Systems: A person operating a motor vehicle in which there is a child passenger less than four (4) years of age is required by law to properly secure the child in a child restraint system (i.e. child car seat) unless it is reasonably determined that the child cannot fit in a child restraint system (and then the child is required by law to be properly restrained by a safety belt).

CHAPTER D

SAFE VEHICLE OPERATION IN SPECIFIC SITUATIONS: This chapter summarizes the laws for special driving situations and guidelines for safe driving under these situations.

1. Night Driving: Operating a vehicle at night presents a number of potential problems. These problems can be made worse if the driver is not used to operating a vehicle at night or when other adverse conditions exist.

a. Visibility: Pedestrians, road markings, and other vehicles are more difficult to identify and recognize at night than in the daytime. Under nighttime driving conditions, the driver should reduce normal speed, especially on unfamiliar roads. The glare of oncoming headlights may also reduce

effective vision. To avoid the effects of glare, drivers should not look directly into the lights of an approaching vehicle but should focus on the right side of the road.

b. Fatigue: Drivers are more likely to be fatigued while driving at night, and have a higher risk for accidents. Plan ahead to avoid driving late at night, if possible, or at any time when you have not had enough sleep.

Signs of excessive fatigue while driving include trouble focusing your vision, having no memory of the last few minutes of your drive, beginning to drift out of your lane, failing to maintain a constant speed, as well as the more obvious signs such as head nodding and actually feeling as though you are about to fall asleep.

The best thing to do if you are beginning to feel drowsy is to let another person drive or find a safe area to pull over and rest. A driver's efforts to stay awake when excessively fatigued, such as rolling down the windows, turning up the radio, etc., do not work well and may give a false sense of alertness putting all drivers at a greater risk.

c. Use of Headlights: Drivers must use headlights between sunset and sunrise as well as at any other time in which visibility is less than five hundred (500) feet. Lower headlight beams must be used when approaching within 500 feet of an oncoming vehicle or when following within 200 feet of the rear of another vehicle.

d. Pedestrian Safety: Pedestrians walking along a roadway, which does not have a sidewalk, should walk facing the oncoming traffic. When walking along a highway at night or under darkened conditions, pedestrians should wear light colored clothing or carry something that will reflect light.

2. Driving in Certain Weather Conditions:

a. Winter Driving: Driving in wintertime presents a number of possible dangers due to the possibility of ice, snow and extremely cold temperatures.

(i) Driving in Icy Conditions: Ice on the roadway is a potentially dangerous weather condition that can cause a vehicle to lose traction. If your vehicle begins to lose traction and the rear wheels begin sliding sideways, ease off the gas pedal. If your vehicle has conventional brakes, turn the steering wheel in a controlled manner in the direction the rear of the car is sliding. When traction is regained, straighten the vehicle and proceed

slowly. As in any emergency situation when your vehicle has an anti-lock brake system (ABS), keep your foot on the brake pedal, maintaining firm and continuous pressure while steering normally. The simple rule of thumb with anti-lock brakes (ABS) is to brake hard and steer normally. DO NOT PUMP THE BRAKES! A mechanical sound or noise and vibration or increased resistance in the brake pedal indicate that ABS is working. Just hold the brake pedal down and let the anti-lock system work for you. Remember to always give yourself more time to stop on icy roads.

(ii) Driving in Snow: Snow, especially when mixed with significant wind, poses a number of problems for the driver. Visibility may be substantially reduced. Watch for drifting snow, particularly in rural areas where only a few inches of snow can cause roads to become impassable. Always watch for icy conditions when there is snowfall on the ground, particularly at intersections. Use your headlights so other drivers can see you.

(iii) Driving in Extremely Cold Conditions: Always give your vehicle engine plenty of time to warm up in very cold conditions. If you will be travelling in rural or unpopulated areas take along blankets or other items to remain warm in case your vehicle suffers from engine failure. Drive on a full tank of gas so that if you become stranded you can keep the heater in your vehicle running for as long as possible.

b. Driving in Rain: Wet roadway surfaces can be dangerously slick, especially immediately following a rainfall. Due to a phenomenon known as hydroplaning, when driving on wet roads, your vehicle is actually travelling on a thin layer of oil, dirt and water on the road. Give yourself additional time to stop. Use your headlights so other drivers can see you.

c. Driving in Fog: Fog can greatly reduce visibility of other vehicles, pedestrians, and traffic signals. Drive cautiously and at reduced speeds. Do not use your high headlight beams; your low headlight beams illuminate the road and objects ahead of you better.

If fog closes in completely, such that visibility is reduced to near zero, carefully pull off the road as far as possible, and stop. Leave your headlights on and make sure you turn on your flashing emergency signals.

3. Railroad Crossings: Countless people lose their lives or suffer tragic injuries due to train/vehicle collisions. Invariably, the cause for such collisions is the disregard, and often the willful evasion, of railroad crossing warnings by drivers.

   a. Who must stop: All vehicles carrying passengers for hire, all buses carrying passengers, and all vehicles carrying explosives or flammable liquids. Such vehicles must stop not closer than 15 feet or more than 50 feet, from the nearest rail. This requirement does not apply to abandoned railroad tracks.

   b. Watch for Railroad Crossing Signs: Railroad crossing signs signal a driver to slow down, look, listen and be prepared to stop for a train. Crossing signs include the yellow, round railroad crossing sign, pavement markings, the railroad crossbuck sign, and at crossings with significant vehicular traffic, red flashing light signals, and often, crossing gates.

   c. Railroad Crossing Stop Signs: If you approach a railroad crossing at which a stop sign is posted, you must come to a complete stop and proceed over the tracks only after looking both ways to make sure a train is not approaching. Never assume that because there is only a stop sign the track in not used and a train is not coming.

   d. Safety Guidelines for Railroad Crossings:

      (i) Obey the Warning Signs: Due to the size of trains, the actual speed of a train can be very deceiving. **Under no circumstances attempt to race a train to a crossing.** Never drive around a crossing gate that is extended down.

      (ii) Avoid Stopping on the Railroad Tracks: Never begin across the tracks unless you can legally clear the tracks without stopping. If your vehicle stalls on the tracks, all occupants should leave the vehicle immediately. Look to see that no train is approaching the crossing and carefully proceed to have the vehicle removed safely from the tracks.

      (iii) Watch for Additional Trains: Where there is more than one track, a driver waiting for the track to clear must make sure another train is not coming on the other track once the first train has cleared the tracks. Be especially careful that a train is not proceeding in the opposite direction behind the first train where it may be difficult to see.

4. Stopping for School Buses: Always stop whenever the red, octagonal stop sign arm extends from the left side of the bus when approaching from either direction. Please note: You need not stop if you and the school bus are going in opposite directions on a road that has more than two lanes and is separated by a median strip not made for vehicle travel. All school buses are required to stop at all railroad crossings.

   a. School Bus Vehicle Requirements: School buses that transport children to or from school must meet the following requirements:
      (i) Be painted chrome-yellow and display the words **School Bus** on the front and rear of the vehicle in black letters, at least 8 inches high;
      (ii) Display two amber lights in front and rear, to warn motorists that the bus is slowing down to stop for the purpose of loading or discharging pupils, and two red lights in front and rear to indicate that the bus is stopped to load or discharge pupils;
      (iii) Be equipped with amber turn signals;
      (iv) Be equipped with a stop arm which extends at least 18 inches from the side of the bus body and with a red octagonal stop sign with white letters to be extended while the bus is stopped on the roadway for the purpose of loading or discharging school children.

   b. Unloading Passengers: A school bus driver must load and unload school children as close as practical to the right hand curb or edge of the roadway.

   c. Maximum Speed Limits: The speed limit for school buses is 40 miles an hour on county or township roads and 55 miles an hour on U.S. and State highways.

   d. Use for Non-School Functions: School authorities may give permission, in writing, for a school bus to be used in transporting children for certain non-school functions as prescribed by law.

   e. Special Purpose Buses: A special purpose bus will be registered by public school corporations and private schools for transportation of school children to extracurricular events. This vehicle is not to be used as a school bus. If a van, station wagon, or bus is transporting six (6) or more persons for extracurricular events, it must have a body change to Special Purpose and must be inspected by the Indiana State Police.

5. Lighting, Lamp and Flag requirements for Projecting Loads:

a. Projections beyond Rear of Motor Vehicle:

Motor vehicles transporting loads which extend more than four (4) feet beyond the rear of the motor vehicle, or which have tailboards or tailgates extending more than four (4) feet beyond the body, shall have projections marked as follows:

(1) On each side of the projecting load, one red lamp/flag, visible from the side, located so to indicate maximum overhang.

(2) On the rear of the projecting load, two red lamps/flags, visible from the rear, one at each side; and two red reflectors visible from the rear, one at each side, located to indicate maximum width.

b. Vehicular Hazard Warning Flashing Lamps: Every bus, truck and truck tractor shall be equipped with a signaling system. In addition to signaling turning movements, they shall have a switch or combination of switches that will cause the two front turn signals and the two rear signals to flash simultaneously as a vehicular traffic signal warning. The signal shall be capable of flashing simultaneously with the ignition of the vehicle on or off.

c. Emergency equipment on all power units: Except for a lightweight vehicle, every bus, truck, tractor trailer, and every driven vehicle in a tow operation must be equipped as follows:

(i) A fire extinguisher: Properly filled and located so that it is readily accessible for use. It must be securely mounted on the vehicle, and must be designed and maintained to permit visual determination of whether it is fully charged.

(A) A power unit that is used to transport hazardous materials must be equipped with a fire extinguisher having an Underwriters' Laboratories rating of 10 B: C or more.

(B) A power unit that is not used to transport hazardous materials must be equipped with either:

(1) A fire extinguisher having an Underwriters' Laboratories rating of 5 B: C or more; or

(2) Two fire extinguishers, each of which has an Underwriters' Laboratories rating of 4 B: C or more.

(ii) Spare fuses: At least one spare fuse or other overload protective device if the devices used are not of a reset type, for each kind and size used.

(iii) Warning devices for stopped vehicles: If you are driving a truck, bus or tractor trailer and your vehicle is disabled on a traveled roadway or its shoulder, you must display one of the following combinations of warning devices, upon stopping:

(A) 3 bi-directional emergency reflective triangles that conform to the requirements of Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard No. 125; or

(B) At least 6 fuses or 3 liquid-burning flares displayed as follows:

(1) On the traffic side of the vehicle, in the direction of the nearest approaching traffic, place a lighted flare/fuse, lighted red electric lantern, or portable red emergency reflector.

(2) As quickly as possible, place the emergency devices in the following order:

(a) One device approximately 100 feet from the disabled vehicle toward approaching traffic (200 feet on divided highway, and at least 500 feet if stalled within 500 feet of a curve, hillcrest, or other area where a driver's view of your vehicle may be blocked).

(b) One device approximately 100 feet from the disabled vehicle in the opposite direction (200 feet on divided highways, and at least 500 feet if stalled within 500 feet of a curve, hillcrest, or other area where a driver's view of your vehicle may be blocked). Place each device in the center of the traffic lane occupied by the disabled vehicle and one at the traffic side of the vehicle.

NOTE: Liquid-burning flares, fuses, oil lanterns, or any signal produced by a flame shall not be carried on any commercial motor vehicle transporting Division 1.1, 1.2, 1.3 (explosives) hazardous materials, any cargo trank motor vehicle used for the transporting of Division 2.1 (flammable gas) or Class 3 (flammable liquid) hazardous materials whether loaded or empty; or any commercial motor vehicle using compressed gas as a motor fuel.

During daylight hours, use bi-directional emergency reflective triangles, or red flags in place of flares, reflectors, or electric lanterns. Under these conditions, no flare is required on the traffic side of the disabled vehicle.

6. Emergency Vehicles:

a. Emergency vehicles such as ambulances, police vehicles, fire vehicles, and

emergency rescue vehicles, are permitted to display a red flashing light. Drivers must yield the right-of-way to that vehicle. Drivers must always listen for sirens on these vehicles and yield the right-of-way. The siren is usually heard before the emergency vehicle is in view. To yield the right-of-way, all traffic, in either direction, must slow down, pull to the right of the road, and stop until the emergency vehicle passes.

b. When an emergency vehicle is stationary and is displaying its flashing lights, a driver must slow down and move into a lane, which is not adjacent to the emergency vehicle, if it is possible to do so safely. If it is not possible to do so safely, then a driver must then reduce the speed of the vehicle and proceed with caution.

c. Volunteer Firefighter Vehicles: Privately owned vehicles, which display a flashing blue light, are used by volunteer firefighters responding to an alarm. The driver should yield the right-of-way to these vehicles.

d. Emergency Medical Vehicles: A flashing green light on a privately owned vehicle is used by a certified emergency medical technician responding to an emergency. A driver must yield the right-of-way to these vehicles.

7. Highway Construction and Maintenance Areas: These areas pose dangers both for drivers and for the workers who are trying to do their job. Be respectful of these dangers and exercise caution whenever traveling in a highway work zone.

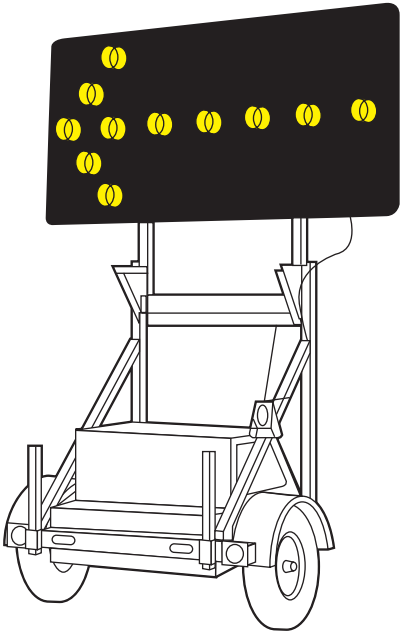
a. Worksite Speed Limits: The highest legal posted speed limit in a highway work zone is forty-five (45) miles per hour, and may be posted lower than that. The following diagrams illustrate common worksite speed limit signs:

The sign on the right sets a uniformed maximum speed limit at all times while the sign on the left establishes a special maximum speed limit when workers are present. Obey these lower speed limits at all times. Under Indiana law, speeding tickets in highway work zones are subject to higher fines than other speeding tickets.

b. Flashing Arrow Boards: The flashing arrow board illustrated below helps to divert traffic to a specific lane(s) when one or more lane(s) are under construction. Carefully move to the lane indicated by the flashing arrow board well in advance. Be careful not to move into a lane of oncoming traffic. Flashing arrow boards are often used to indicate a detour or “crossover.” In

these cases, lane markings on the road, traffic cones, barrels or barricades will outline the path a vehicle is supposed to follow. A flashing arrow board not indicating a direction either way is a signal to use caution but does not require a driver to move to another lane.

c. Manual Traffic Control at Worksites: At some work sites, one or more flaggers may be posted at each end of the work zone to control traffic flow when one or more lanes is closed to traffic. If you are approaching a flagger, reduce your speed immediately and be prepared to follow the directions indicated in the diagram below. Drivers must stop when a flagger extends a red flag in a horizontal position into the line of traffic. Drivers may proceed at a reduced speed, only when directed by the flagger. If a flagger uses a signal paddle, the driver shall likewise stop or proceed slowly according to the “STOP” or “SLOW” message displayed on the sign.



USE OF HAND SIGNALING DEVICES BY FLAGGER

Preferred Method — Paddle

Emergency Use Only — Flag

To Stop Traffic

Traffic Proceed

To Alert and Slow Traffic

8. Traffic Control Officers and Official Processions:

   a. Traffic Control Officers: Because of special events, traffic congestion or other reasons, a law enforcement officer may direct traffic at specific intersections or in other situations. Always obey the command of a traffic control officer. A police officer's command may be different from a traffic signal or sign. In such a case, the traffic officer's command is the one that must be obeyed.

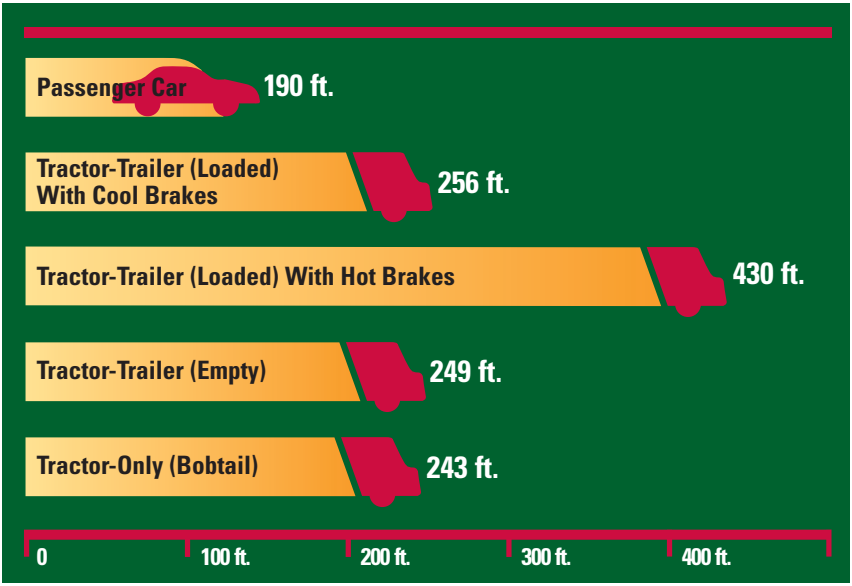
   b. Official Processions: Official processions, such as a funeral procession, have the right of way regardless of a traffic signal that indicates otherwise.

9. Sharing the Road with Trucks:

a. Most drivers do not understand how to share the road safely with large trucks. To reduce the chance of an accident with a large truck, motorists must be familiar with a truck's physical capabilities with respect to braking, turning, truck driver blind spots, and maneuverability. According to the National Highway and Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), 1 out of 8 traffic fatalities result from a collision involving a large truck.

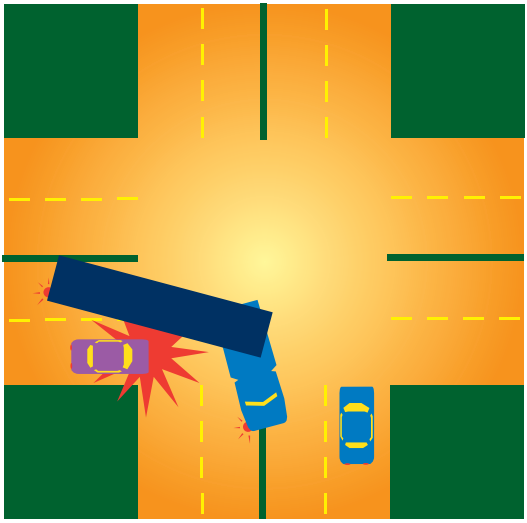
b. Braking: Trucks take longer to stop than a car traveling at the same speed. The average passenger car traveling at 55 mph can stop in about 130-140 feet (often taking 190 feet), almost half the length of a football field. A fully loaded tractor-trailer with hot brakes may take more than 400 feet to come to a complete stop, or more than the length of a football field.

AVERAGE TOTAL STOPPING DISTANCE AT 55 MPH*



*Distance based on a study of average braking distances by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety + reaction distance recommended by the National Safety Council.

c. Turning: With any turning vehicle, the rear wheels follow a shorter path than the front wheels. The longer the vehicle, the greater the difference.



That is why drivers of tractor-trailers often swing out to the left as the first step in making a tight turn. When following a tractor-trailer, watch its turn signals before trying to pass, especially to the right. If it appears to be moving to the left, wait a moment to check and see which way the driver is signaling and watch for a right turn.

d. Blind Spots: Trucks have much more severe blind spots than passenger cars. Many motorists falsely assume that a trucker can see the road better because he or she sits twice as high as the driver of a car does. While truckers do enjoy a better forward view and have bigger mirrors, they still have serious blind spots into which a car can completely disappear from view, up to twenty (20) feet in front of the cab, on either side of the tractor-trailer, particularly alongside the cab, and up to 200 feet in the rear. Motorists lingering in the blind spots on the sides and in the rear hamper a trucker's ability to take evasive action to avoid a dangerous situation, increasing the possibility of an accident. Always keep in mind that if you cannot see the truck driver in his side mirror, he cannot see you.

Represents danger areas around trucks where crashes are more likely to occur.

e. Maneuverability: Trucks are designed to carry products long distances; they are not designed to be as maneuverable as cars. Trucks have longer stopping and accelerating distances, a wider turning radius, and weigh more. On multi-lane highways tractor-trailers stay in the center lane to help the flow of local traffic on and off the highway. Staying in the middle lane also increases the truck driver's options if he or she has to switch lanes in order to avoid a dangerous situation or an accident.

The following is a list of some of the most common mistakes motorists must avoid when driving around trucks:

(i) Cutting off a truck in traffic or on the highway to reach an exit or turn. Cutting into the open space in front of a truck removes the truck driver's cushion of safety. Trying to beat a truck to a single-lane construction zone represents a particularly dangerous situation. Take a moment to slow down and exit behind a truck; it will only take you a few extra seconds.

(ii) Don't linger alongside a truck when passing. Always pass a tractor-trailer completely and always on the left side. If you linger when passing the truck, your position makes it impossible for the trucker to take evasive action if an obstacle appears in the road ahead.

(iii) Following too close or tailgating. When following behind a truck, if you cannot see the truck driver's rearview mirrors, there is no way the truck driver can see you. Tailgating a truck or a car is dangerous because you take away your own cushion of safety if the vehicle in front of you stops short. In addition, if the vehicle you are following hits something in the road you will have no time to react before it hits the front of your car.

(iv) Never underestimate the size and speed of an approaching tractor-trailer. Because of its large size, a tractor-trailer often appears to be traveling at a slower speed than it is. A substantial number of car-truck collisions take place at intersections because the driver of the car does not realize how close the truck is or how quickly it is approaching.

f. Following too Closely: A truck or tractor-trailer combination may not follow another tractor or tractor-trailer combination closer than 300 feet, except when overtaking and passing, or when traveling on a non-interstate roadway within a business or residence district.

g. General Size Limitations For Commercial Vehicles Without Special Permit:

Maximum Width	8 feet, 6 inches
Maximum Height of Any Vehicle	13 feet, 6 inches
Maximum Length of Any Single Vehicle	36 feet
Maximum Length	
(2-vehicle combination)	60 feet
(3-vehicle combination)	65 feet
Maximum Length of Semi-Trailer Combination	28 feet, 6 inches
Maximum Length of Any Unit of Tractor-Trailer Semi-Trailer Combination	28 feet, 6 inches
Maximum Distance Allowed Between Coupled or Towed Vehicle	15 feet

h. Maximum Weight Limitations: You may not move any vehicle or combination with a gross weight over 80,000 pounds on any highway without a special permit. Vehicle weight must be distributed within the following limits:

Maximum single axle weight	20,000 lbs.
Maximum wheel weight	800 lbs. per inch width of tire rim
Maximum tandem axle weight	17,000 lbs. per axle

The Federal bridge formula may restrict gross weight on shorter wheel based vehicles. Overweight trucks may be impounded by law enforcement.

(i) Special Permits: Before moving loads on public highways that exceed the size and weight limits described above, you must secure a special permit from the Indiana Department of Revenue for state-maintained routes, and from local authorities for routes that are not maintained by the state.

(ii) Local Limitations: It is illegal to operate on any road, bridge, or structure, any vehicle that has a gross weight greater than that posted by the local road authority having jurisdiction in that area. This includes locally established “frost” laws.

i. Required Lighting Equipment: Every truck and bus must have 2 head lights, 1 rear white license plate light, 2 red tail lights, and at least 1 red stop light. To show vehicle width at night, every truck or bus that is 80 inches wide or wider must have 4 clearance lights: 1 amber light at each side of the front, and 1 red light at each side of the rear.

10. Sharing the Road with Motorcycles, Bicycles and other Two-Wheeled Vehicles: Drivers must routinely share the roadway with two-wheeled vehicles such as motorcycles and bicycles. Motorcycles and bicycles are entitled to the same right-of-way and are required to observe the same traffic laws as operators of automobiles. Operators of these types of vehicles count on motorists to drive with care in their proximity.

a. Watching for Two-Wheeled Vehicles: Two-wheeled vehicles are much smaller and more difficult to spot than most other vehicles on the road. It is extremely important that the automobile driver be alert and on the look- out for two-wheeled vehicles.

b. Maintaining a Safe Distance: The automobile driver should also maintain a safe following distance in sharing the road with two-wheeled vehicles. A motorist following a two-wheeled vehicle should increase the normal space between vehicles. Two-wheeled vehicles usually have significantly shorter stopping distances than heavier cars or buses. The safe and wise driver of four-wheeled vehicles will adjust for this and allow more room for the two-wheeled vehicle ahead.

c. Two-Wheeled Vehicles at Night: Because of their poor nighttime visibility, two-wheeled vehicles present special problems to drivers of four-wheeled vehicles. In some cases bicycles will not have proper reflectors or lights and will be almost invisible at night. Drivers of all vehicles should be on the look-out for bicycles at night, especially around schools, playgrounds and parks. Motorcycle drivers and bicycle riders should do everything they can to make themselves more easily seen. Wear light colored clothing, preferably with reflectorized material attached, and make sure that vehicle reflectors are clean and visible.

11. Safe Driving on Interstate Highways: Though designed for safety, interstate highways pose specific risks for drivers that do not follow the rules of the road and safe driving techniques.

a. Speed: Excessive speed greatly increases the possibility of an accident. A driver has much less time to react to unexpected actions of other drivers or other potential roadway hazards.

b. Alertness: Because a driver has less time to react, driver alertness is very important to anticipate problems well before a driver comes upon other drivers. Also, watch for signs of fatigue that tell the driver that he or she should let someone else drive or that he or she should get off the highway at an exit to rest.

c. Planning Ahead: Consult maps or get directions to the destination in which you are going prior to departing. A driver who is trying to read every exit sign to attempt to determine where to get off of the highway cannot devote sufficient attention to traffic conditions.

d. Special Interstate Traffic Prohibitions:
   (i) Backing Up: It is illegal to back up on an interstate highway to reach a missed exit. If you miss an exit, simply drive to the next exit.
   (ii) U-Turns: It is illegal for any vehicle, other than an emergency vehicle or a highway maintenance vehicle, to make a U-turn by crossing the median of an interstate highway.
   (iii) Stopping on Shoulder: Except in the event of an emergency or a disabled vehicle, do not stop or park a vehicle on the shoulder of an interstate highway.

12. Car Phone Safety: Using a car phone while operating a vehicle affects your ability to concentrate and can be a driving hazard. Successful defensive driving depends upon concentrating on the road. Follow these safety guidelines:
   (i) Always assess traffic conditions before you place a call;
   (ii) When possible, place your call while your vehicle is stopped;
   (iii) Use your memory dial to minimize dialing time;
   (iv) Always be prepared to give driving your full attention, even if it means ending a call; and
   (v) Consider obtaining a speaker phone option to free both hands while driving.