

## **DEFENSIVE DRIVING BASICS ACCELERATING AND BRAKING**

You can't get very far on the road without speeding up and slowing down. So it makes sense to know how to do it properly. Here are some tips for getting the most out of your vehicle's performance when accelerating and braking.

### **Accelerating**

- Pick up speed smoothly and gradually. It's safer and saves gas.
- Wear shoes that don't interfere with smooth operation of the accelerator.
- Use cruise control only for divided highways with little traffic and few turns. Stay alert and ready to apply the brakes at any time.

### **Braking**

- When braking, use firm, even pressure.
- Tap your brakes to signal cars behind that you intend to stop.
- Get ready to brake each time you enter an intersection.
- Use brakes as little as possible by keeping to a reasonable speed and safe following distance and scanning the road ahead. Plan ahead to avoid sudden stopping. For instance, slow down as you approach a red light.
- Try to avoid slamming on the brakes. Press the brakes evenly and smoothly, backing off the brakes slightly if the wheels start to lock up. Locking the brakes causes skids. (If your vehicle has anti-lock brakes, apply even pressure; don't pump the brakes.)
- Protect your brakes from failure on a hill by using low gears. "Riding the brake" down a long hill can lead to unexpected brake failure.
- Check brake action often, especially if you've just gone through a hilly area or standing water.
- Maintain your brakes by having them serviced regularly and checking the brake fluid frequently. In addition, have your brakes checked if they make noise, pull to one side or need to be pumped to work, or if your brake fluid level drops suddenly.