

DEFENSIVE DRIVING BASICS AVOIDING HEAD-ON COLLISIONS

Head-on collisions are the most dangerous kind of collision. In a recent year, 1,700 people died as a result of head-on collisions. The majority of these collisions could have been prevented using defensive driving techniques.

Reduce Risk With Safe Driving

Once you get into a collision situation, the options are few and dangerous. But you can increase your chances of avoiding a collision by following a few safe driving tips:

- Only drive when you are alert and sober.
- Scan the road ahead frequently for hazards. Look as far as the next hill or curve, or the next corner in cities. This way, you have more time to get out of the way of an approaching hazard.
- Stay well to the right of the center line, where oncoming traffic is less likely to stray, and so that you can get to the shoulder or side of the road more quickly.
- Obey speed limits. You will have more time to react to a hazard, and should a collision occur, it will not be as damaging at a lower speed.

When a Vehicle Is in Your Lane

If an oncoming vehicle veers into your lane for any reason, slow down right away and sound your horn. Be prepared to stop or drive off the road. Remember that driving into a ditch is far less dangerous than driving into a head-on collision.

When a Collision Is About to Happen

Remember these principles in case you need to make split-second decisions to avoid a head-on collision:

- Always drive to the right to get out of the way since the driver of the other vehicle is likely to move back into his or her lane after recovering control.
- Avoid slamming on the brakes and skidding when driving off the road.
- If the choice is between a head-on and hitting a fixed object such as a tree or utility pole, it's always safer to hit the fixed object, which has no momentum of its own.
- If you must hit an object or oncoming vehicle, aim as far to the right as possible, where the collision forces are much less intense.

During their lifetime, one third of all drivers will be involved in a collision that results in a fatality. Take the time to learn and practice defensive driving and always wear your safety belt. If you are involved in a head-on collision, you may get hurt but you are far less likely to be killed.