

## **DEFENSIVE DRIVING BASICS DRIVING ON BAD ROADS**

We can't do all of our driving on brand new high-speed expressways. Many roads, especially older country roads, are narrow and poorly surfaced. Others have not been well maintained because of budget cuts. Some are in the midst of repair. Here are some road conditions you may encounter.

### **Poor Surface Conditions**

Watch out for potholes and bumps in the road. They can damage your steering and cause you to lose control of your vehicle. If there is sand, dirt or oil on the road, drive more slowly. These all reduce traction and steering control. Some roads are extremely slippery, especially when wet or frosty. Overpasses freeze first. Underpasses thaw last. Expect wet leaves on the road in autumn and hot melting asphalt in summer. Both create slippery conditions.

### **Other Road Conditions**

Some roads seem to specialize in blind curves and hills. Many rural roads are poorly marked so that you must be ready for the unexpected—a hairpin turn, unannounced intersection, or narrow bridge. Other roads are poorly banked making curves especially treacherous.

Country roads may be too narrow for two cars, especially around curves. Drive slowly and sound your horn when in these curves. It helps to keep your headlights on as well, even in the daytime. If you meet another car on a one-lane stretch of road with no shoulder to allow passing, the driver going downhill must back up.

If a road has a prolonged steep grade, use your low gears to prevent brake failure caused from overheating.

Pay attention to the side of the road. Is there a paved shoulder? Soft shoulder? Sharp dropoff? Can you drive off the road in an emergency?

### **Construction Zones**

If you drive into a construction zone, slow down and increase your following distance. Lane markings may be unclear or nonexistent. Traffic may be rerouted through much narrower lanes around the construction area. The shape and surface of the road may suddenly change. Be on the lookout for construction workers and equipment in the road. Get ready to come to a full stop and wait until oncoming traffic has passed, should traffic be reduced to one lane.

Drive carefully when on unfamiliar roads, especially those in poor condition. But avoid being overconfident on roads you drive every day. There may be sudden, unexpected changes in the surface caused by recent bad weather or construction.