



WITH ALL THIS RAIN, SAFETY ON THE ROAD IS CRUCIAL

By John Jones, III

California is receiving historic amounts of rain, and there is more wet weather on the way. In addition to setting records throughout Southern and Northern California, the heavy rainfall is also causing reduced visibility, making it harder for drivers to see other vehicles, hazards, pedestrians, and cyclists.

Wet weather presents particularly dangerous road conditions in urban areas, where the buildup of oil makes roads slick. When added with low visibility, large amounts of traffic, one-way streets, limited U-turns, bus and bike lanes, speeding, uneven roads and potholes, it becomes a hazard not only for drivers, but also for those who do not have the same protections as drivers and passengers with seat belts and air bags.

Because of harsh weather, it doesn't hurt to refresh our memories regarding some best practices to help avoid crashes.

To help you arrive safely to your destinations this rainy season, the California Office of Traffic Safety and California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) want to remind drivers, pedestrians, and cyclists of the following tips:

Avoid distracted driving:

- **Do not engage cell phones:** Texting or using your cell phone can divert a driver's attention from the road. Silence your phone before you get on the road. You may utilize hands-free options, but remember that you may only use the phone to activate or deactivate a function, like starting or ending a call.
- **If you need your cell phone, be responsible:** If you must answer a call, text or attend a video conference, pull over to a safe location and park your car to use your phone.
- **Fallen objects:** If something falls on the floor, leave it until you can safely retrieve the item or pull over to a safe parking spot before trying to reach it.

Follow the speed limit:

- **Do not brake suddenly:** Ease your foot off the gas until the vehicle slows naturally or brake in a gentle, pumping action.
- **Leave room between other vehicles:** If you follow too closely to the vehicle ahead of you and they suddenly slow down or stop, you may not be able to avoid a crash. Stopping distances are greater in wet weather.
- **Stay alert to observe potential dangers:** Staying alert allows you to quickly react to potential problems – such as the driver in front of you suddenly stopping or a pedestrian or cyclist maneuvering onto the road.



- **Be cautious when backing up:** Check your rear-view before backing up to watch for other vehicles, pedestrians or cyclists. Also, pay attention to your blind spots by looking over both shoulders.
- **Be work zone alert:** Keep an eye out for work zones and flashing amber lights. California's "Move Over" law requires all drivers to move over a lane or, if they are unable to do so safely, slow down when they see amber flashing lights on Caltrans vehicles, law enforcement and emergency vehicles, and tow trucks.

Tips for pedestrians:

- **Utilize the proper gear:** Wear brightly colored clothes at night to make sure drivers can see you and carry a flashlight.
- **Pay attention:** Stay off your phone and look left-right-left before crossing the street.
- **Observe safety zones and notifications:** Cross streets at marked crosswalks and intersections, preferably with a stop sign or signal.

Tips for cyclists:

- **Ride in the right direction:** Go with the flow of traffic. It helps reduce confusion for drivers, pedestrians and other cyclists. If there is a bike lane, use it.
- **Protect yourself:** Always wear a helmet. It protects both your head and brain, preventing external and internal damage.
- **Reduce your risks:** Use hand signals when turning or stopping. When others know your next move, they can plan accordingly.

As Californians continue to face record amounts of rain, I encourage you to do your part to help reduce the risk of crashes and increase road safety. Since drivers, pedestrians and cyclists must share the road, let's respect one another and Go Safely.

To learn more about ways to stay safe, visit www.gosafelyca.org.

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