



VITALS

For Medical Transport Professionals

A Weekly Safety Newsletter

Should Driving Change with the Seasons?

It's not just *bad weather* that produces spikes in accident frequency and severity, but it's the *CHANGE* in the weather. Safety, risk control and claims people have known for years that changes produces accidents when drivers don't make adjustments for those changes. This includes almost any change: weather (especially major weather changes), road condition, equipment and driver (including physical and mental). You can even apply it to actual driving maneuvers such as lane changes, changes in direction of travel, changes in speed. These are all accident producing situations if the proper adjustments aren't made.

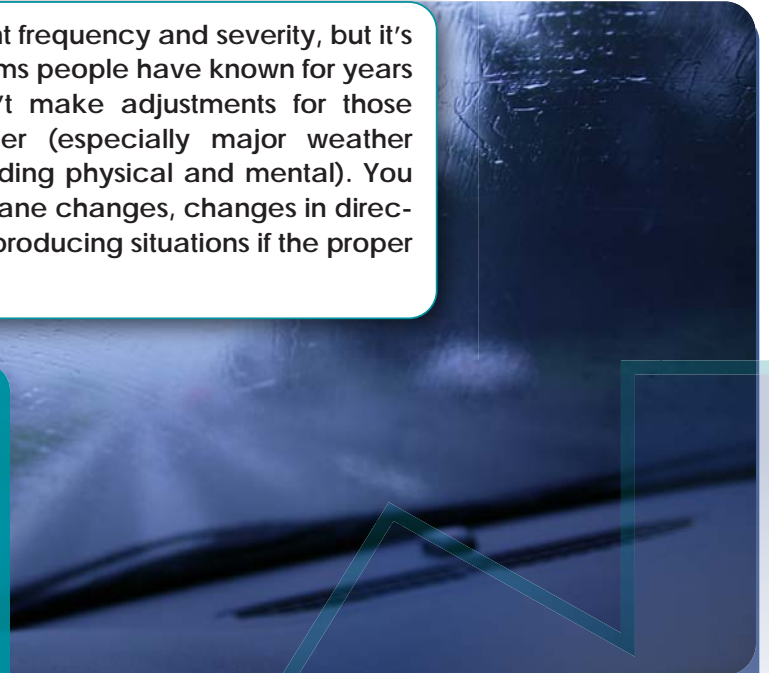
Concerning bad weather, stopping distances are dramatically affected and there may be numerous changes needed in driving behavior just to control this element. Training teaches us how to steer out of a skid, and while that is important information, the real problem lies in the mistake made that caused the skid. Most drivers already know what changes need to be made in driving, but sometimes we just need a reminder to bring those things to the forefront. There is a real bonus for those who think about these things ahead of time; they are much better prepared. They are the ones who will probably avoid involvement in an accident. And, it's not enough to do everything right yourself. You also have to watch out for those drivers who commit driving errors, which can involve you.

Remember this... if all else fails, *SLOW DOWN*. Slowing down allows more time to react to situations; reduces stopping distances dramatically; reduces forces that contribute to accidents; and reduces the damage and injuries if the accident does occur.



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Stopping Distance

At today's highway speeds, about 75MPH, your vehicle is traveling at 110 feet per second. Total stopping distance includes:

Perception distance: the distance traveled from the time a hazard is seen, recognized and action starts.

Reaction distance: the distance traveled in the time it takes to get your foot off the accelerator and onto the brake (about $\frac{3}{4}$ of a second or more).

Breaking distance: the distance traveled once the brakes are applied.

Let's say it takes you a couple of seconds to see and recognize a hazard—that is 220 feet. You also decide, in those 2 seconds, to step on the brake. If you do it very quickly, about $\frac{3}{4}$ of a second, you'll go about another 83 feet. Breaking distance varies, but in a large truck or bus, in the best conditions, that could take another 6, 7, 8 seconds maybe. In 7 seconds, you've traveled another 770 feet.

Altogether then, you've traveled 1,073 feet. If it's at night and your lights shine out about 300 feet, you could hit an object in the road before your brake linings hit the drums.

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