

AVOIDING CAR ACCIDENTS

If you've been injured in an accident, obtaining just compensation for your injuries is important. However, most people would agree that it is always better to avoid being injured in the first place. This is especially true when you are behind the wheel of a car, because car accidents can be the source of some of the most debilitating injuries that you can suffer.

Some of the things that we should do to avoid a collision are obvious: slow down, do not follow too closely, keep your eyes open, and take into account the weather and the traffic conditions when you drive. Make sure that your car is in good condition. Frequently, accidents are caused by bad brakes, balding or defective tires, or other maintenance problems. Also, don't get angry at other drivers, which can lead to road rage and aggressive driving.

Not So Obvious

However, there are a number of other tips that may be less obvious, but which can also help keep you safe. Many collisions occur when someone is turning or when vehicles have to stop and start. This makes traveling through intersections the most dangerous part of driving and, in fact, most collisions occur at intersections.

When you come to an intersection, take your time. Check all oncoming traffic for the driver who may be running a red light. Check each direction twice—you will be surprised how many times you will have missed seeing a car or motorcycle hidden in a blind spot the first time around.

Intersections

Don't be the first one into the intersection when the light turns green. Make sure that the vehicles clearing the intersection before you are not towing one of those difficult-to-see low trailers. Use hand signals, such as a wave, to communicate your intentions to other drivers. When in doubt, wait to enter the intersection until you are sure that you can do so safely.

Parking Lots

Parking lots can also be dangerous. In a parking lot, treat the lines painted on the

pavement the same way that you would treat the lines painted on a road and obey them. Don't cut across rows and keep your head on a swivel to look out for the person who is not following this rule. Travel up and down the rows only in the direction marked and treat the end of a row as if it is an intersection on the road. Be especially careful when you back out of a parking spot. Be sure to "clear the rear" before you back up in order to avoid hitting pedestrians (especially small children, who often run ahead of their parents).

Blind Spots

Remember blind spots, yours *and* theirs. Many collisions that occur in a lane of traffic happen when a driver tries to change lanes or tries to merge without checking his or her blind spot. Always check your blind spot before changing lanes and do not drive in another driver's blind spot because the other driver might not be so careful. Take special care around semi trucks, which have a very large blind spot. The sign on the back of many semi trucks, saying "if you can't see my mirrors I can't see you," is correct, so be sure you can see their mirrors. Even if you have the right of way, nobody wants to get into a collision with an 18-wheeler.

Taking Care in Neighborhoods

Finally, take special care when driving in residential neighborhoods. The speed limit may be 35 miles per hour, but that does not mean that you have to go that fast, especially if you think it is not safe to do so. A neighborhood has children and pets, both of whom may dart into traffic without looking, so you have to look out for them. This is especially true where cars are parallel-parked by the side of the road. A child can be hidden behind a car, and it may be too late to stop if you don't keep a sharp lookout.

Because so much of driving safely depends on what the other driver is doing, there is no certain way to guarantee that you will never be in a collision. However, by exercising proper care and using good sense, you can greatly reduce your chances of being hurt in an avoidable accident.

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