



Safety Corner

Topic: Surviving Dangerous Driving Situations

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Learning Objective:

Students will learn how to survive dangerous driving situations.

Sometimes despite your best efforts, you find yourself in a situation in which your survival depends upon making good choices and solid decisions. You will be given a set of dangerous scenarios where you must prioritize the actions you should take or the tools you should use that will be most useful in helping you survive the situation. Most of the scenarios are based on real life events.

Tire Blowout

You are driving down the highway at 70 miles per hour when you hear a loud boom from a tire, followed by a whoosh of air escaping. The body of the car begins to pull strongly toward the left into oncoming traffic that is also traveling at 70 miles per hour. Prioritize the actions that will help you survive using the steps provided.

Tire Blowout Survival Actions

1. Stay calm. Blowing a tire at high speed can be one of the scariest things you experience as a driver particularly if the car begins to veer in the direction of the blown tire and you feel like you may lose control. Remind yourself that you are in full control, not the tire. Take a deep breath. You've got this.
2. Grip the steering wheel firmly and do not slam on the brakes. Maintain control of the steering wheel.
3. Ease your car back into your lane of travel.
4. Let the car slow gradually as it naturally will.
5. Before it stops, use the gas to navigate to a safe place on the side of the road or exit the highway if possible. Do not let it stop completely on the highway. That may place you at great risk.
6. Then turn on your emergency flashers, even if it is broad daylight so you can be seen. Once you are safely off the highway, you can assess whether you choose to change the tire yourself or call for help.



Hydroplaning

You are caught in a thunderstorm on your way home from school. As you attempt to exit the highway, you recognize that your front tires have lost traction and you are floating along the road with little to no control of where the car is going. You are hydroplaning and with a steep curve just ahead, you have got to do something to prevent a crash. Use these steps to prioritize your actions that may help you survive.

Hydroplaning Survival Actions

Hydroplaning occurs when a tire encounters more water than it can scatter and begins to slide along on the surface of a road. The best way to avoid hydroplaning is to slow your speed. It's okay to go slower than the speed limit in inclement weather. Go only as fast as the road conditions permit and you can survive hydroplaning.

1. Know what kind of vehicle you are driving (front or rear wheel drive, standard or ABS brakes). Before you start the motor, understand what kind of car you are driving. Look in the owner's manual or if you are borrowing the car, ask the owner. It may look quite sunny outside, but how you respond in this emergency depends on the type of car you are driving and your skill level.
2. Stay calm. It may seem quite scary if you appear to be losing control of your car but remind yourself that you are a capable driver and take a deep breath. You've got this.
3. Ease on or off the accelerator, depending upon the type of vehicle. If you are driving a front wheel or all wheel vehicle with ABS braking system, gently accelerate toward an open space on the road before applying slow, steady pressure to the brakes. If you are driving a rear wheel drive vehicle with no ABS, gently lift off the accelerator and allow the car to decelerate naturally before steering into an open space on the road.
4. Brake gently. Your movements during hydroplaning are slow and gentle. Don't slam on the brakes but don't rev on the accelerator either.
5. Wait to feel tires reconnect with road.



Car Stuck in the Mud or Snow

You are driving slowly down a dirt or snowy road when you hit a patch of mud or deep snow. It is deeper than you expected and even though you rev your engine, the tires merely spin in place. You have these tools in your vehicle. Prioritize how you would use them, if at all, to survive this emergency.

First, use your flashlight to assess the situation. How deep are the tires entrenched? Is it useful to try to pull out or should you give up and call for a tow truck? If the wheels are spinning and there is no movement on the vehicle, this may not be your lucky day. If you see some movement, no matter how slight, you stand a better chance of surviving this emergency.

- Ask any passengers to exit the vehicle to lessen the weight.
- You can use those floor mats from your car or select wood, debris, rocks, gravel, kitty litter, or anything else on hand. Have everyone pack these around the tires to give the tires traction.
- Passengers can help push the car. Position passengers on the opposite end of the car in which you are trying to exit. When you accelerate in either reverse or drive, they can push in the same direction. Don't rev the engine. Accelerate gently, rocking your steering wheel and the tires with small movements until you gain momentum. Keep your car in a lower gear. Patience is key in this emergency.

It should also be noted that while you had some things in your car that were particularly helpful, there were some things that were not helpful for this emergency. This is a reminder to keep a well-stocked emergency kit in your car for all kinds of emergencies.

In all these situations, you need the following skills:

- plan ahead,
- the ability to stay calm,
- prioritize your options, and
- problem solve and adapt to survive.

Sources:

<https://www.consumerreports.org/cro/news/2011/01/what-to-do-if-you-get-stuck-in-snow-sand-or-mud/index.htm>
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