

CHAPTER 9

VEHICLE EQUIPMENT AND SAFETY



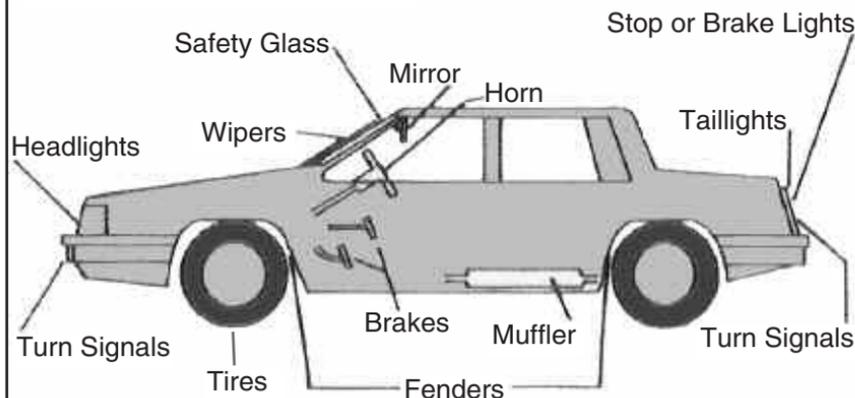
Under Idaho law, you may not drive any vehicle that is mechanically unsafe. If your vehicle needs repairs, lacks vital equipment, or presents some other danger, you are responsible for correcting the problem.

Idaho does not require an annual safety inspection, but if you are stopped by a police officer who finds your vehicle is unsafe or lacks proper equipment, the officer may issue you a citation.

Required Equipment

- **Brakes:** All vehicles must have two brake systems designed so that if one fails the other still works. Foot brakes must stop a vehicle that is traveling 20 mph on dry pavement within a distance of 25 feet. The emergency or parking brake must stop the vehicle within 55 feet under similar conditions, and must hold the car stationary on a hill when parked.
- **Headlights:** Two headlamps (with high and low beams) are required and must be aimed to light the road without blinding oncoming drivers. High beams must allow the driver to see people and vehicles at least 350 feet away. Low beams must light the roadway at least 100 feet ahead. Headlights must not be covered with any reflective, opaque, or non-transparent material.
- **Stop or Brake Lights:** All motor vehicles must have functioning red or amber brake lights visible for at least 100 feet to the rear in normal sunlight. Brake lights must be designed to come on when you apply the foot brake. Keep the brake light lenses clean of dirt and snow.

REQUIRED EQUIPMENT



- **Taillights:** Vehicles built before January 1, 1956, and motorcycles must have at least one red light mounted on the rear. All other motor vehicles, trailers, and semi-trailers must have at least two red lights mounted on the left and right rear. These taillights must be visible at least 500 feet to the rear.
- **Turn Signals:** All motor vehicles built after January 1, 1955, must have flashing electric left-turn and right-turn signals on the front and rear with a switch that can be controlled by the driver. The front signals must be white or amber and the rear signals must be red or amber.
- **Tires:** Each tire should have at least 1/32" of tread groove.
- **Horns:** All motor vehicles must have a horn that can be heard at least 200 feet away. Horns with unreasonably loud or harsh sounds are prohibited.
- **Windows and Windshields Must:**
 - be made of approved safety glass;
 - be replaced when damage to the glass hampers the driver's view;
 - be kept free of signs or stickers not required by law;
 - not be blocked by any object placed or hung in the vehicle;
 - be kept free of frost, snow, dirt, or anything else that obscures the driver's visibility; and
 - not be treated with a mirror surface or other substance that makes them difficult to see through, even from the outside.
- **Windshield Wipers:** All motor vehicles must be equipped with wipers to keep the windshield clear of rain, snow, or other moisture.
- **Mirrors:** All motor vehicles must have a rear view mirror that provides a view of the highway for at least 200 feet to the rear. If a load or trailer obscures the driver's normal view through the rear

window, the vehicle must have two additional rear view mirrors, one on each side of the vehicle.

- **Mufflers:** All motor vehicles must have a muffler that is in good working order that prevents loud or unusual noise.
- **Fenders and Flaps:** All motor vehicles, trailers and semitrailers must have fenders, wheel covers or flaps to prevent mud, water, or other material from being thrown from the wheels up onto other vehicles.

Child Restraints are Required

Automobile crashes are the leading cause of death for American children over one year of age. Some 1,500 children die in auto accidents each year. Another 100,000 are injured.

Most of these deaths and injuries can be avoided if parents take the time to buckle their children into an approved child restraint system.



Approved Child-Restraint System.

Idaho law requires anyone carrying children six years of age or younger in a non-commercial motor vehicle to properly protect children in approved child car safety seats. The law applies to cars manufactured with car safety belts after January 1, 1966.

Proper protection means:

- Using approved safety seats (seats that meet federal safety standards).
- Child must be snugly fitted into safety seats with the straps that are attached to the seat.
- Safety seat must be fastened to the automobile with the car safety belt.
- Using safety seats on every trip.

Seat Belts and Shoulder Straps

Idaho law requires all occupants to wear safety belts and/or shoulder straps when riding in a motor vehicle equipped with these devices by the factory. Studies by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration show that when worn, safety belts:

- reduce your chances of serious injury in an auto accident by 50%.
- are 60-70% effective in preventing fatalities in auto accidents.

Safety belts also help drivers maintain control of their car on winding or rough roads or when trying to avoid a collision.

WARNING!

WHEN IT IS HOT OUTSIDE, DO NOT LEAVE CHILDREN IN A VEHICLE UNATTENDED.

On hot summer days, the inside of a car can become dangerously hot in a short period of time. One study found that with the windows up and the temperature outside at 94 degrees, the inside of a car can heat to 120 degrees in just 30 minutes, and up to 132 degrees after one hour.

Studded Snow Tires

Studded snow tires may be used only from October 1st. to April 30th. Some years, the Idaho Transportation Department adjusts the dates due to weather conditions.

Equipment Not Allowed

- Red or blue emergency lights. These are authorized for emergency vehicles only.
- Sirens, bells, and whistles.
- Any muffler cut-out or bypass that makes the exhaust system amplify or increase noise.
- More than two spotlights.
- More than two auxiliary lights in front.
- More than two fog lights in front.
- More than two cowl or fender lights.

Antique Vehicles and Street Rods

Equipment requirements for antique vehicles and street rods may vary from the requirements for regular passenger vehicles. Please contact the Idaho Transportation Department's Vehicle Services Section in Boise for additional information.

Study Questions

1. Which of the following are required equipment on motor vehicles in Idaho: brakes, stop or brake lights, headlights, taillights, horns, mufflers, turn signals, rear view mirrors?
2. When do you need outside rear view mirrors on your car or truck?
3. What color must front turn signals be? Rear turn signals?
4. True or false: When traveling in a vehicle equipped with safety belts, drivers are required by Idaho law to protect children who are under four years of age and weigh less than 40 pounds by placing them in approved child safety seats.