

CHAPTER 5



SHARING THE ROAD

At times, the experience of having a mix of cars, trucks, motorcycles, bicycles, and pedestrians using the roadway complicates driving and increases hazards for everyone. The keys to minimizing those hazards are courtesy, respect for the rights of others, and a heightened awareness of potential problems. Caution and awareness on your part may save others from serious injury or death.

Motorcycles

Motorcycle riders have the same rights and responsibilities as other highway users, and they must obey the same traffic laws.

Motorcycles are smaller and harder to see than cars. They're easily hidden in a car's blind spot. Because it may be hard to judge the distance to motorcycles, or to tell how fast they are moving, be alert to their presence and be extra cautious.

Here are some situations that call for special attention when motorcycles are around.

- **Left turns:** Cars turning left in front of an oncoming motorcycle cause many serious car/cycle crashes. Drivers may fail to see a motorcycle rider in the traffic scene. Or a driver may fail to judge the speed of an oncoming motorcycle. As a driver, the correct precaution is for you to look and then look again. Make sure you see the motorcycle and know its

speed before you make a left turn.

- **Turn signals:** Most motorcycles do not have turn signals that turn off automatically. At times, motorcycle riders may forget to switch the signal off. Before you make a turn in front of a motorcycle with a signal flashing, be sure the motorcycle is turning and not continuing straight into your path.
- **Lanes:** Motorcycles are entitled to the same full lane width as all other vehicles. Good motorcycle riders are constantly changing positions within the lane so they can see and be seen, and to avoid objects in the road. Never move into the same lane alongside a motorcycle, even if the lane is wide and the cyclist is riding far to one side.
- **Bad weather:** Weather conditions and slippery surfaces can be serious problems for motorcycles. Allow even more following room when it's raining or the road surface is slick.
- **Road surface:** Unusual road surfaces and irregularities in the road that don't affect other vehicles can create problems for motorcycles. Gravel, debris, pavement seams, small animals, and even manhole covers may force a motorcycle rider to change speed or direction.

Large Vehicles

Safely sharing the road with large trucks and buses requires knowledge of their special limitations. Generally speaking, the bigger they are:

- The bigger their blind spots
- The more room they need to turn or change lanes
- The longer it takes them to stop
- The longer it takes them to pass
- The more likely you're going to be the loser in a collision

When you are near large vehicles on the road, pay special attention to the following:

- **Blind spots:** Stay out of blind spots. If you are following a large vehicle and you cannot see the driver's mirrors, then the driver cannot see you either. There are blind spots behind and on each side of large vehicles. Avoid driving alongside large vehicles for prolonged periods.
- **Visibility:** Large vehicles can block your vision of the road ahead. When following large vehicles, adjust your following distance so you can see most of the roadway ahead.
- **Passing:** When cars cut in too soon after passing, then quickly slow down, drivers of large vehicles are forced to react with little time or room to spare. Because it takes longer to pass a large vehicle, you should keep a steady speed when passing and be sure you can see the cab of the vehicle in your rear-view mirror before moving back into the lane.

Help Promote **WRECK**Less Driving

No-Zone

No-Zone

No-Zone

No-Zone

Don't hang out
in the
No-Zone

- **Speeding up and stopping:** Large vehicles cannot gain speed or stop as quickly as smaller vehicles can. For example, it takes a loaded truck with properly adjusted brakes 290 feet to come to a complete stop when traveling 55 mph on a dry road. Allow extra space for large vehicles to speed up or stop. The operators of these vehicles adjust the space between their vehicles and the vehicles ahead to allow for a safe following distance. When passing them, be sure to allow for this increased safety zone when returning to your lane of travel.
- **Turning space:** When making sharp turns, large vehicles sometimes require more than one lane to complete the turn. Be sure to allow enough room for these vehicles to safely complete their turns. When turning right, these drivers may angle into the left lane so they can make the right turn without running over the curb or hitting something. Do not try to squeeze by on the right side when a large vehicle is making a turn like this. It is a frequent cause of accidents involving large vehicles.
- **Hazardous Materials:** Avoid driving near vehicles carrying hazardous materials. These vehicles will be placarded to identify what they are carrying. All vehicles carrying hazardous materials must stop at all railroad crossings, so be prepared to stop if you are following one.
- **Long, Steep Grades:** When traveling up or down steep grades, large vehicles travel slowly. On four-lane roads, they will use the right lane. Be prepared to encounter slow vehicles in the right lane, and do not park in or near “escape” or “runaway” ramps. These ramps should only be used to stop vehicles whose brakes have failed.

The “No Zone”

The No-Zone represents danger areas around large vehicles where crashes are more likely to happen (see diagram on previous page).

Bicycles

Every year the number of bicycles increases on Idaho roadways. Cycling has become an important means of transportation as well as recreation.

Bicycle riders are legally allowed to ride on all Idaho roadways, have the same rights as motorists, and are required to ride with the flow of traffic. They must ride as close to the right-hand curb or edge of the roadway as safety allows, except when passing, turning left, avoiding an obstacle, or when the roadway does not allow a bicycle and vehicle to travel safely side by side.

To increase the safety margin when passing a bicycle rider, move into the left lane if possible. If you are not able to change lanes, pass with as much clearance as possible—a safe margin is three feet or more. This may require waiting for a break in oncoming traffic. When passing children on

bicycles, slow down, and be aware that they may unpredictably swerve into your lane.

In Idaho, cyclists do not need to come to a complete stop at stop signs. They must, however, yield the right-of-way to vehicles in or already at the intersection, and then proceed with caution through the intersection.

Bicyclists may proceed with caution through a red light after stopping and yielding the right of way to vehicles already in the intersection. They do not need to come to a complete stop when turning right on a red light. However, they must yield the right of way to vehicles already in the intersection.

Cyclists are relatively unprotected compared to motor vehicle operators and most collisions result in injury to the cyclist. Therefore, motor vehicle operators should be alert and use caution when encountering them.

A student edition *Bicycle Rider's Guide* and an *Idaho Bicycle Commuter's Guide* are available from the Idaho Transportation Department. For more information, contact Idaho's Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinator at (208) 334-8272.

Pedestrians

Vehicle-pedestrian collisions account for approximately 12 percent of all traffic deaths. When driving a vehicle, you must be aware of pedestrian activity, particularly in residential areas, near schools, school crossings, trail crossings, parking lots, intersections, crosswalks, bus stops, playgrounds, and parks.

You always need to be alert and use caution when driving near pedestrians. Pedestrians are unpredictable and highly vulnerable to injury.

Children at Play

Take extra care when driving in residential areas and school zones and at times and places where children are likely to be found near the roadway. Before getting into your vehicle, walk around it to be sure no children are playing near it that you may not be able to see from the driver's seat.

When backing out of a driveway, watch for children who may run behind your vehicle. **OBAY THE SPEED LIMIT** and be alert when vehicles are parked along the roadway. Darting into traffic from between or around a parked car is a common cause of serious injury to children. They are often too short to be seen easily when playing near parked cars, so use extra

caution when you see any children near the roadway. They may have an unseen playmate who cannot see you either.

Horseback Riders

People riding horses are allowed to use most public roads. They also have the same rights as motor vehicle operators and must obey the same rules.

When approaching someone riding a horse, take care to avoid frightening the animal—slow down and allow plenty of room when passing. Never sound your horn because you may frighten the horse and cause an accident. If you encounter a rider that is having difficulty controlling an animal, be sure to use extreme caution when going around them. Stop if necessary to prevent becoming a part of the hazard.

Funeral Processions

If you see a funeral procession on the road, do not drive between or join vehicles in the formation unless you are authorized to do so by a police officer. Do not pass the procession in the right lane on a multi-lane highway unless the procession is in the farthest left lane.

You may not enter an intersection when the procession is proceeding through (regardless of the color of the traffic light) unless you can do so without crossing the path of the procession. Always give funeral processions the right of way.

All vehicles in a funeral procession are required to have their headlights and tail lights turned on. The first and last vehicles in the procession must also have their warning lights flashing to indicate the beginning and ending points of the formation.