

Holiday tips: Safe Driving

Johannesburg - The holiday season is fast approaching, and across the country, thousands of motorists are preparing to pack their cars and either head home or to their holiday destination.

Sadly, every year this period also sees a marked increase in road fatalities. The cost to the country in lost lives is unmeasurable.

There is also a significant cost to the economy as a result. Estimates are that road traffic crashes cost the economy some 3,4% of GDP. The South African Insurance Association along with various other partners would like to appeal to motorists that they not only ensure they have their bags packed for their trip, but also adopt safe driving practices.

This begins with the night before.

It is important to get a minimum of six hours sleep so you can concentrate behind the wheel.

Other import tips to follow are:

Driving at night

Try to plan your trips so that you do as little night time driving as possible. Research tells us that 40% of all traffic collisions happen at night because poor light reduces your ability to see the road, road signs, pedestrians and other vehicles or cyclists. Take extra care during this time.

Always drive with your headlights on for improved visibility – parking lights are not strong enough for driving at night. In fact, it is illegal to drive without your headlights or tail lights on at night. However, you should turn your headlights from high beam (brights) to low beam when approaching an oncoming vehicle or when travelling behind another vehicle, as the light can be blinding to the other driver.

Rainy weather

Rainy weather increases your chance of having an accident by up to four times. In wet weather, always slow down and increase your following distance between vehicles. Stay towards the middle lane, as water tends to pool in the outer lanes. Avoid abrupt braking if possible, as this can cause skidding or hydroplaning. Your tyres may lose contact with the road, so rather slow down by taking your foot off the accelerator.

Music and driving

Music can be an unsafe distraction while driving if you listen to it at high volume. No matter what type of music you're listening to, or if it's through earphones, listening to loud music while driving is dangerous. It not only encourages you to drive faster, but it can reduce your ability to hear police, ambulance or fire engine sirens, warning hooters, barking dogs, cyclist bells or even strange engine noises.

Essential spares

A few emergency spares can be very useful in case of a breakdown. A spare tyre should always be kept in the boot and replaced if used on the car. Ensure that your spare tyre has

been checked for punctures and has been inflated. Ensure that there is also a spare jack and spanner to replace a tyre if needs be. Jumper leads can help you when your battery is dead, while a bottle of engine oil can help stop your engine from seizing. Lastly, a reflective triangle is essential for your car (as required by law) as a safety warning sign to stop your car being rear-ended when broken down.

Towing

If your car breaks down or you are in a collision, it is very important that you use the approved and accredited emergency towing company contracted by your insurance company. If you do not make use of the contracted emergency towing provider, you may be liable for the cost of towing and storage fees incurred.

Drive safely

As excitement grips travellers, so should the sobering statistics of road accidents that have been recorded and reported by the Arrive Alive campaign. SAIA urges all motorists to arrive alive and take precautionary measures to help curb the amount of road and motor accidents.

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