



Change of Seasons Requires Change In Driving Habits

Fall just might be the most beautiful of the four seasons, but with the change of season comes the need to change your driving habits. In fact, according to new research from the University of Michigan Transportation Safety Institute (UMTSI), fall is the most deadly season for driving.

October Surprise

The UMTSI report, published in the Traffic Injury Prevention journal, analyzed monthly death crash figures over a thirteen year period (1994 - 2006), and found that during the month of October the chance of a crash resulting in driver fatality is 16% greater per miles driven than in the winter month of March. The study theorized that the snowy and icy weather, despite the impression that it should increase driving risk, leads to less people on the road and slower driving speeds.

Animals Increase Driving Dangers

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), the fall season is the most dangerous time for vehicle crashes with animals, the majority of which involve deer. It's mating time for deer and a time for animals to find food and shelter for the upcoming winter. Slowing down and staying alert whenever you're on the road – no matter what type of roads you travel – are the best ways to help you avoid animals that seem to appear out of nowhere, sometimes even during daylight hours.

Driving Blind

At this time of year, early morning and late afternoon glare can play optical tricks even on the most careful drivers. The problem is at its worst the first hour after sunrise and the last hour before sunset when you can literally be blinded by the sun. Slow down and increase your following distance; keep your windshield clean and the washer fluid reservoir full; and have your headlights on to help make your vehicle more visible to others.

Rain and Slippery Road Conditions

Intense rain storms and slippery road conditions can happen quickly in the early fall. The first few minutes of rainfall on dry pavement are particularly dangerous. Oil, dust, dirt and other debris collect on the roadways and, when mixed with moisture, the roads can become as slick as ice. Heavy rains create pools of water, compromising driving control and causing hydroplaning and loss of clear vision. Check your wipers before encountering heavy rains; know which areas along your trip might be affected by rain; be cautious when driving into standing water, especially when the depth is difficult to determine; be aware of the change in braking efficiency after driving through standing water; and increase your following distance and decrease your speed.

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