

Taking notice of the weather the past few mornings looking out the window or by the receiving of dense fog advisories over the cell phone, I've decided to go over a few things on how to drive safely in the fog...or to do as I did...crawl back in bed and wait it out.

Even if you're a seasoned pro behind the wheel, fog can make driving difficult — and even dangerous. Sadly, fog-related accidents cause more than 600 fatalities each year and more than 16,300 people being injured.

Fog is produced by the suspension of very fine moisture droplets in the air. When light hits these droplets, it scatters and results in a loss of contrast and a dense white background. As these droplets get smaller, fog gets thicker and makes for roadways that are even more blanketed. As a result, car drivers cannot see very far ahead, and car accidents become an even greater possibility than normal.

The 1990 Interstate 75 fog disaster was a transportation accident that occurred on the morning of December 11, 1990, on a section of Interstate 75 (I-75) near Calhoun, Tennessee, during dense fog which obscured the visibility of motorists. The accident occurred in an area where fog is common and had been the site of previous multi-vehicle accidents caused by poor visibility. It consisted of a series of multi-vehicle collisions that ultimately involved 99 vehicles, and resulted in 12 deaths and 42 injuries. It was reportedly the largest motor vehicle accident in United States history when it occurred.

Use the right headlight beam. Using your car's high beams can severely decrease your visibility. While high beam headlights increase your visibility in most situations, the stronger beams will reflect from the water particles in the fog and make it appear denser. Many vehicles are equipped with special fog lights or fog lamps. These may or may not increase your visibility. Low beams are better for driving in fog. If you don't think your current headlights are powerful enough in low beam mode, consider a headlight replacement according to the National Weather Service.

Use your windshield wipers. Windshield wipers will help keep the glass clear, even if it is not raining. Putting them on the lowest possible setting is usually proficient. Moisture and ice on your windshield can create glare, which can make it even *more* difficult to see. Give yourself the best view possible by clearing off your windshield completely.

Turn on your defroster. Because fog usually occurs in high humidity, it is probably a good idea to use your vehicle's interior defrost function. This will help dry off the inside of your car's windows. Try to avoid wiping the windows with a rag or piece of your clothing. Not only will this distract your attention from the road, it is also likely to cause the windows to smear.

Maintain a safe speed. Decrease your speed while driving in fog. You may only be able to see a few feet in front of your car. This means that turns, obstacles, and other vehicles will first appear when you are already upon them.

Use your turn signals early. Give plenty of notice to other drivers before slowing down to take a turn.

Listen to information about road conditions. Listen to local weather radio at a low volume during travel to stay informed of any area road closures or accidents.

Buckle up. Texas law requires that all drivers and passengers wear seatbelts. Buckling up saves lives, especially in bad weather.

Keep a look out for other vehicles lights. The white lights of oncoming traffic will be more difficult to see than the red lights of vehicles in front of you. This can cause you to focus too much on the narrow patch of landscape in front of you – causing you to miss other things!

Don't slam on your brakes. When you come to an especially dense area of fog, your first instinct might be to stop so that you can regain your bearings. Remember that other vehicles are behind you and will be coming upon the same reduced visibility. Stopping in the middle of the road in decreased visibility will increase your chances of getting rear-ended by an approaching vehicle. Stopping your car could cause a chain reaction and a major pileup.

Keep your distance. Keep a much greater distance between your car and the car in front of you. Although you may not feel comfortable losing sight of one of the only objects that is visible to you at this time, make sure that there is a significant distance between your car and the vehicle before you. Decreased visibility means longer braking times, so that added space is your friend. In other words, slow down! It may take you longer to get to your destination, but your safety is worth it.

Skip cruise control. Foggy roads can have surprises waiting, and it's best to maintain complete control of your car.

Follow the right-side line of the road to guide you," suggests AccuWeather. That's easy enough to remember! Don't be afraid to slow down and drive cautiously. You should not use the center pavement lines to guide you, however. Doing so might move you closer to oncoming cars. If you're having trouble seeing them, they're likely not seeing you very well either.

Don't accelerate if a car behind you is too close. It can be tempting to try and "lose" the guy who is right on your tail, but that can make your situation more dangerous. Stick to a safe, reasonable speed limit in the fog, even if other drivers don't.

Reduce your distractions. Your attention should always be 100% on the road when you're driving. It's even more imperative that you're completely focused when driving through dense fog. Eliminate whatever might distract you. Turn off the radio. Ask any passengers to be quiet. Stay off your phone—even if you have a hands-free device. Every ounce of your attention needs to be on the road.

Check your mirrors before slowing down, and gently apply your brakes. The earlier you can start to tap the brakes, the better! Your brake lights will alert drivers behind you that you are slowing down, and you won't catch them by surprise with a sudden stop.

Keep moving or pull over. If you choose to pull over and wait out the fog, pull as far to the side of the road as possible. Once you're stopped, turn on your hazard lights. The key to driving in the fog is to remember that *everyone* is having trouble seeing, so play it extra safe by getting well out of the way and using your lights to let other drivers know where you are. Pulling into a gas station or other roadside venue is a better idea. It might be tempting to stop your vehicle when you can't see where you're going. Don't do that because cars coming up behind you might not realize you're stopped until it's too late. You will cause an accident.

Fog is common in the early morning hours and will disappear after the sun has risen. If you are driving in extremely dense fog at night, you may need to take periodic breaks to rest your eyes.

Stay home when the fog is bad (if possible!) Notify an employer you're running late before leaving or that you won't be leaving until later. Fog can make driving scary and dangerous, so stay off the roads altogether if you're able. The best advice for driving in the fog is don't.

This concludes this evening's training. This is KI5UAJ.