



MASTER GARDENER PROGRAM

THINKING SAFE AND GREEN



**AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES
ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH AND SAFETY**

#7

SAFE DRIVING PRACTICES

Information given here is intended for use by program representatives, master gardeners, and those they train.



Data available from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) indicates 4,215 traffic fatalities occurred in California during 2003. Of this total, 36% of the fatalities were speed related and 42% of the victims were not using seat belt restraints. NHTSA estimates the economic cost of California motor vehicle traffic crashes was approximately \$20.7 billion during 2000. Many motor vehicle accidents (and injuries) are preventable if drivers maintain a high level of alertness while

driving and follow safe driving practices, including wearing seat belt restraints. **Videos on safe driving practices are available for loan from the ANR Environmental Health & Safety Library at <http://safety.ucanr.org>.**

Safe Driving Practices

- Before changing lanes, turn your head to check mirror blind spots for other traffic. Always signal before passing other vehicles.
- Maintain a three to four second distance between your vehicle and the vehicle ahead of you.
- Always look in both directions when entering intersections, crosswalks, or railroad crossings.
- Do not rely on traffic signals to stop cross traffic. Always scan controlled intersections for oncoming cross traffic.
- Allow adequate room in front of you to stop. It takes about 400 feet to react and bring a car to a stop from a speed of 55 mph. Likewise at 35 mph, it takes about 210 feet.
- Reduce your speed when driving at night. Be prepared to stop within the distance lighted by your headlights.
- Use your high beams where appropriate. Dim your high beams when necessary.
- Reduce your driving speed to accommodate adverse weather conditions (i.e., heavy rain, snow, or fog).
- When driving in fog use your low beams, increase your following distance, and be prepared to stop within the distance you can see ahead.
- If the fog becomes too thick to sufficiently see ahead, stop driving, turn off your lights, and pull completely off the road. Continue driving when the fog thins and allows adequate road vision.
- When entering a freeway, merge at the speed of the freeway traffic. When exiting a freeway, signal your intention to exit for about five seconds.
- Always change freeway lanes one at a time. Signal your intention to change freeway lanes.
- Allow an adequate distance to oncoming traffic when attempting to pass another vehicle on a two-lane road. At 55 mph, you will need a distance of about one-third of a mile (1,750 feet) from oncoming traffic to pass safely.
- Always allow pedestrians, including bicyclists, the right-of-way in crosswalks.
- It is a good safety practice to avoid using a cellular telephone while operating a motor vehicle.

Always wear seat belt restraints and obey posted speed limits.