



Driving
Safety



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The Latest Technology

These days, new vehicles are typically equipped with an advanced driver assistance system.

Abbreviated as “ADAS,” its features include cameras, sensors and automated technology that help detect nearby vehicles, people or obstacles.

ADAS may also account for human errors, and even make the necessary corrections for you.

That may mean emergency corrections or even an almost autonomous driving experience. Here’s more about the latest technology:

LANE DEPARTURE SYSTEMS

This feature uses sensors and cameras to help drivers remain in their own lane, unless a signal to turn or change lanes is engaged.

Notifications follow if the vehicle detects a drift into another lane. In some cases, the system may automatically steer the car back toward the correct position on the roadway.

BLIND SPOT MONITORS

Cameras scan areas where drivers can’t see, then send alerts like flashing lights, audible warnings, or wheel vibrations as obstacles are detected.

These monitors typically work in concert with automatic braking to prevent collisions. They’re most helpful when changing lanes, but can be used in situations like parking, as well.

FORWARD COLLISION WARNING

This system tracks your distance and speed from surrounding objects. In the case of a potential collision, the driver will be immediately alerted – typically with loud verbal commands and brightly lit dashboard warnings. Emergency braking may be automatically engaged to prevent an accident.

REAR CROSS-TRAFFIC SENSORS

This feature is particularly helpful when backing up with limited visibility, as these sensors detect approaching vehicles while in reverse. When cross traffic approaches, an alert sounds. The braking system may be activated to prevent a collision if drivers don’t

react promptly enough.

DRIVER MONITORING SYSTEM

ADAS can be used to analyze driver behavior. Steering movements, lane changes and speed may be signs of fatigue, inattention or impairment. Many systems will issue a dashboard alert, while others provide loud spoken warnings and even vibrate the seat.

WORD OF WARNING

Simple car repairs may be complicated by ADAS, particularly when making replacements. Cameras and sensors may lose functionality or require recalibration if you’ve been in an accident or need a new windshield. Consult with your car dealer or an expert on these systems before moving forward.

When the Weather Turns

Bad weather is more than an inconvenience. It's potentially deadly.

Some 75% of weather-related vehicle crashes happen on wet pavement, according to the U.S. Department of Transportation. Nearly 5,700 people are killed in accidents involving slippery roads.

It's not just during catastrophic weather events, like a flood. Even a typical rain shower can create dangerous situations by mixing with oils on the pavement. The danger is heightened if your vehicle has worn tires or reduced visibility due to faulty wipers or dirty windshields. To ensure a safe rainy-day journey, follow these helpful tips:

SLOW DOWN

The first suggestion is the most obvious, yet it's still sometimes ignored: Reduce your speed. This will allow for safer braking, while lowering your risk of hydroplaning. Maintain a safe distance between vehicles since you'll need longer stopping distances when conditions are slippery.

PROPER MAINTENANCE

Purchase tires that are suitable for the terrain and climate, and then properly maintain them. Thread that's less than 2/32 of an inch in depth won't provide adequate traction in wet conditions. Check tire tread depth and pressure regularly to ensure optimal performance.

TAKE CARE

Be mindful of the everyday dangers involved with driving in these conditions. Avoid abrupt movements when accelerating, braking or turning. If you find yourself hydroplaning, ease off the accelerator but do not immediately apply the brakes. Instead,

allow the vehicle to slow down until you regain control. Consider following another vehicle's tracks to help maintain traction on a slippery road. Remember to turn on your lights when using the windshield wipers. Regularly inspect and clean your windshield wipers, replacing them

as necessary to ensure optimal visibility – especially if your area is subject to heavy rainfall.

OTHER SUGGESTIONS

Disable cruise control in wet conditions so you can safely reduce speed by disengaging the accelerator rather than

braking. If you are unsure how deep an area of standing water might be, turn back rather than risk driving through flooded areas. If possible, avoid driving near buses and large trucks since they may obstruct your visibility with splashes. Keep a close eye out for pedestrians.



Lighting the Way

Vehicle lighting systems play a crucial role in ensuring our safety.

Headlights provide visibility and make it easier for other drivers to spot your vehicle. Additionally, turn and taillight bulbs indicate your intention to stop or turn, allowing other drivers to plan accordingly. Here's a deeper look.

ON AND OFF

There are proper times to turn on your lights. Your state may have specific laws regarding headlight use. You'll have to be even more aware of these guidelines if your vehicle doesn't have an automatic lighting system. The most common regulations involve when your windshield wipers are on and the time of day. You may be required to turn on your headlights when using your wipers. It's a good idea anyway, even during light rainfall, since you'll be enhancing visibility. Regulations might state that headlights are turned on a half hour before sunset and a half hour after sunrise.

HIGH BEAMS

Be mindful of oncoming vehicles and those you are following when driving at night. It's unsafe (and uncomfortable) to leave high beams on while approaching or passing, since the intense brightness could limit visibility for the other driver. Your state may



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have specific regulations requiring drivers to switch from high beams to low when within a certain distance from an oncoming vehicle. Remember that low beams are more effective in adverse weather conditions like rain and fog that may limit daytime visibility. High beams can be

hazardous because of reflected light. To learn more about the regulations in your state, consult with local Department of Motor Vehicle websites or representatives.

YOUR SIGNALS

Stop and turn signals are of critical importance because

they make your intentions clear to fellow drivers. Provide ample warning before making a turn so that others can adjust their speed, brake or change lanes as needed. Broken tail lights pose a serious danger since vehicles behind you may not be able to tell when you are slowing down.

HAVE AN EXTRA

Keep spare bulbs that are compatible with your vehicle in your emergency kit, so you can quickly replace a malfunctioning light, cutting down the risk of accidents. They're affordable, and having a spare can prove to be a lifesaver in unexpected situations.

Securing Yourself

Seat belt use has skyrocketed, but there is still more work to be done.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has recently reported usage rates of almost 92%, saving nearly 15,000 lives. At the same time, however, as many as 2,500 unrestrained drivers could have been saved. More than 50% of passenger fatalities were not wearing seat belts, according to the NHTSA. So, there may be dire consequences for those who neglect to buckle up. Here's how to secure yourself:

WHAT THEY DO

Seat belts serve the critical purpose of keeping you safe and secure when there is an accident. In the event of a collision, unbuckled passengers may be forcefully ejected from a vehicle – potentially resulting in a fatality. Those who aren't properly restrained may suffer severe injury from airbags, even though they are designed to protect you.

PROPER USE

To ensure maximum effectiveness, drivers and their passengers must correctly use the seat belt. Securely fashion both the shoulder and lap belt across your pelvis and rib cage. Those areas of your body are better equipped to withstand the forces exerted during a crash. Ensure that the shoulder belt is positioned in



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the middle of your chest and away from your neck. The lap belt should be placed across your hips, not your stomach.

DIFFERENT MODELS

Make sure the seat belts are suitable for your needs before purchasing a vehicle. You may

be able to request seat belt adjusters from a new car dealer to ensure the best fit. Older or classic cars may be equipped with only lap belts. If so, consult the vehicle manufacturer for information on how to retrofit your car to meet today's safety standards.

HOW TO WEAR THEM

Drivers and passengers should never place the seat belt behind their backs or under their arms.

There are specific laws and recommendations for children, as well. Lap belts for children should fit snugly

across their upper thighs, not their stomachs. The shoulder belt should be snug across their shoulder and chest, avoiding contact with their neck or face.

Keep children in the back-seat for as long as possible, since that's safer.

Vehicle Maintenance

Ensuring that your vehicle is in proper working condition is essential for your safety and the safety of others out on the road. A brake system failure or sudden tire blowout can lead to catastrophic consequences.

Be on the lookout for any dashboard warning lights or unusual noises, since that's your vehicle's primary way of signaling potential problems. With regular maintenance, your vehicle should provide years of comfort and dependability.

WATCH FOR SIGNS

Today's cars do a great job of warning owners about maintenance issues. Dashboard alerts serve as helpful indicators that something is not correctly functioning. Today's modern vehicles can be hooked up to a computer system that identifies problems based on these alerts. Your dealership, oil-change shop or repair personnel will typically provide a handy maintenance schedule. Closely following those dates will help keep you safe while lengthening the life of the vehicle.

At the same time, listen to what your car or truck is tell-



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ing you. If you hear grinding or squeaky sounds when you apply your brakes, it's time to take your vehicle in for an inspection. Brake systems that aren't working properly pose a serious risk to you, your passengers and other drivers.

ON THE ROAD

Driving on worn-out tires poses a significant risk.

Regularly inspect them using a tire depth gauge to ensure your vehicle is still safe for driving. The general recommendation is to replace tires when the tread depth reaches one-eighth of an inch. However, depending on the road conditions in your area, you may need to more frequently replace them. Always follow specifications provided

by the vehicle manufacturer when replacing tires to avoid premature or uneven wear. Of course, purchasing a new set may be costly, but they tend to gradually wear down, allowing more time to plan for this cost.

IN THE GARAGE

Regularly check the condition of your bulbs, including

headlamps, turn signals and brake lights. This may require assistance from another person, as you test both the high and low beams, hazard and reverse lights. Most faulty bulbs can be easily replaced at home. If you don't feel comfortable doing that, or find one in a difficult place to reach, consult a local mechanic.

Dangers for Pedestrians

An estimated 55,000 pedestrians are injured annually on U.S. roadways.

The National Highway Transportation Safety Administration reports more than 6,500 fatalities. Worse, in some places, those numbers are rising at an alarming rate. In all, government reporting shows that pedestrian deaths rose a stunning 77% between 2010 and 2021, compared to a 25% rise in all other traffic fatalities. With so many dangerous interactions, it's never been more important to remain vigilant when walking or operating a motor vehicle.

WHY ARE NUMBERS INCREASING?

The surge appears to have a couple of contributing factors. Many roads were designed to relieve congestion rather than provide safe places to both walk and drive. Yet nearby commercial development places pedestrians in and around these streets. At the same time, U.S. consumers have been increasingly favoring SUVs and trucks over small cars. In 2000, the Governors Highway Safety Association reported that sedans made up 60% of all vehicles. By 2019, that number dropped to 40%. By 2021, the GHSA said more than 80% of vehicle sales were trucks and SUVs.

These heavier vehicles have larger blind spots and are more



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deadly because of their size.

TIPS FOR DRIVERS

When behind the wheel, it's important to be on the lookout for pedestrians at all times. Exercise additional caution in dark or slippery conditions, in particular during inclement weather. Always yield at crosswalks

and stop well before then so other vehicles can see pedestrians crossing. Avoid passing vehicles stopped at crosswalks, since pedestrians who are not visible may be crossing. Follow the speed limit and all traffic regulations, especially in residential areas and school zones where pedestrians are often present.

TIPS FOR PEDESTRIANS

Pedestrians should follow the rules of the road by obeying all signals and signs. Walk on marked sidewalks when available, and always face traffic when there is no sidewalk. Only cross streets at established crosswalks or intersections.

Check for traffic in all

directions before you proceed. If there is no crosswalk, find a well-lit area with a clear view of the road. Wait for a period when no vehicles are coming, then cross while continuing to watch for oncoming traffic. Avoid distractions like phones and earbuds, and always be aware of your surroundings.

Your Smaller Passengers

Safety should be the top priority for every parent and anyone responsible for transporting children in a vehicle.

There's just a lot more responsibility involved when driving with youngsters compared with traveling alone. Hundreds of passengers under the age of 13 lose their lives in traffic accidents each year, according to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety.

To prevent these tragedies, the organization emphasizes the proper use of restraining systems, since that can significantly reduce the number of fatalities. Care should be taken to select the proper seat, and to protect kids from hot vehicles. Remember that the back seat is the safest place for a child to be during an accident.

GETTING STARTED

A critical element of child safety involves installing their seat. Most are equipped with a five-point safety harness that re-distributes the force from a crash toward stronger areas of their developing bodies. They won't perform as well, however, if the car seat isn't properly put in place. The Department of Motor Vehicles recommends carefully reading the instructions. Unfortunately, many people dive right in without consulting the owner's manual. Even if you have experience with car seats,



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newer models may have unique installation guidelines.

WHAT TO BE AWARE OF

If you are using a rear-facing seat, make sure it's at the correct angle so that an infant's head remains stable. With a forward-facing model, use the tether strap to secure the seat

and prevent any head movement. Note that some older vehicles may not have the lower anchors that are required to attach a car seat. After all connections have been made, properly tighten the straps. Well-positioned seats shouldn't move more than an inch in any direction.

ANOTHER DANGER

Dozens of children die each year in the U.S. due to heatstroke after they're left in cars and trucks. These are completely preventable tragedies. Never leave kids unattended in your vehicle, even if you think you'll be gone only for a moment.

Opt for drive-through services if a child is present, and pay at the pump to avoid leaving them alone. Children overheat four times faster than adults, according to the National Safety Council. If you discover a child who's been left alone in a vehicle, call 911 for assistance.