

# Driving Hazards





When you are driving a vehicle, things can happen very fast. You may have very little time to react, so you must know how to handle emergencies when they happen.





The worst hazards to safe driving are cell phone usage, weather, alcohol, drowsiness, aggressive behavior, unintended acceleration, eating, and/or drinking while driving. There is no way to eliminate all potential hazards when driving, but you can better prepare yourself to handle the emergency should it present itself.



Before you start your engine,  
always remember:

- Never drive impaired.
- When approaching your parked vehicle, look in front, under, and behind – looking for objects in your path.
- Adjust your seat cushions and mirrors.
- Verify that all occupants are wearing seat belts.
- Eliminate distractions prior to driving.



## Avoiding Collisions

There are four factors that contribute to the majority of collisions in the United States: Equipment Failure, Roadway Design, Poor Roadway Maintenance, and Driver Behavior



1. **Equipment Failure** (brakes, unsafe tires, steering, and suspension)
2. **Roadway Design** (traffic control devices, roadway surfaces, weather, road hazards, and traffic flow)
3. **Poor Roadway Maintenance** (debris on the highway, potholes, and construction)



#### 4. Driver Behavior

Distracted driving, speeding, tailgating, aggressive driving, unsafe lane changing, failure to signal, and failure to give the right of way. (In 95% of motor vehicle accidents there was some factor of driver behavior combined with one of the other three factors that caused the accident to happen. Even with the best defensive driving behavior, unfortunately, there are some occasions that an accident cannot be avoided. In the few seconds that you have before a possible crash, try not to panic. Reacting properly and quickly can help you avoid crashes or at least minimize the damage.)



To prevent some injuries that commonly occur in a collision, you should put loose items in the trunk whenever possible.

Have an “accident kit” in your glove compartment. Your kit should include paper, pen, insurance information, medical information (if needed), and emergency supplies.





Know your vehicle and its braking system! If you have a manual (disc) brake system, do not brake hard and hold. This locks the wheels and puts the car into a skid.

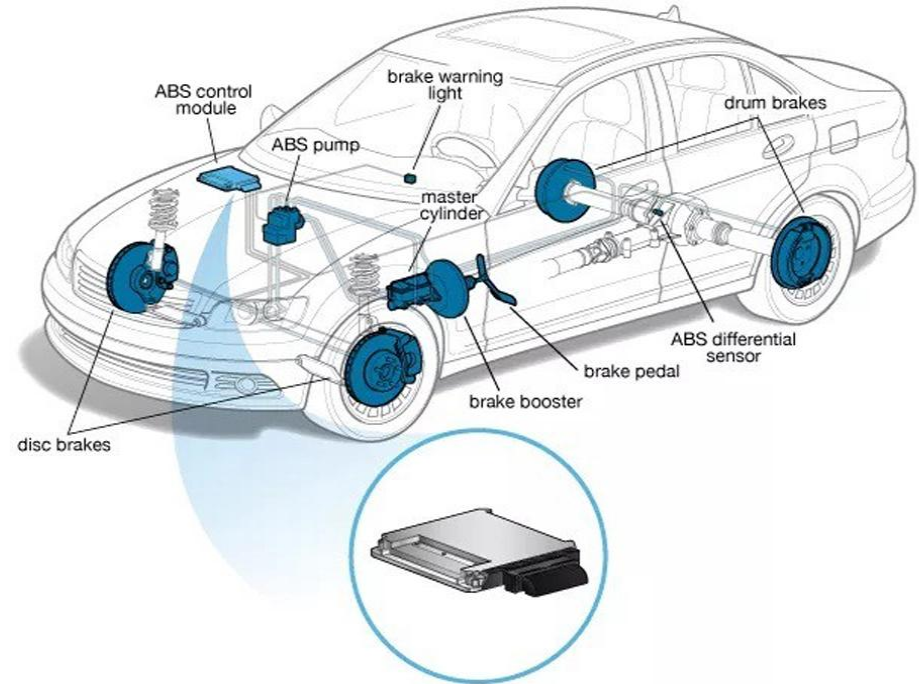


To stop quickly in an emergency, you should:

- Pump the brake.
- Push the brake pedal hard.
- As the car begins to skid, quickly let up on the brake.
- Then quickly push down again. Use this quick pumping action until the car is stopped.

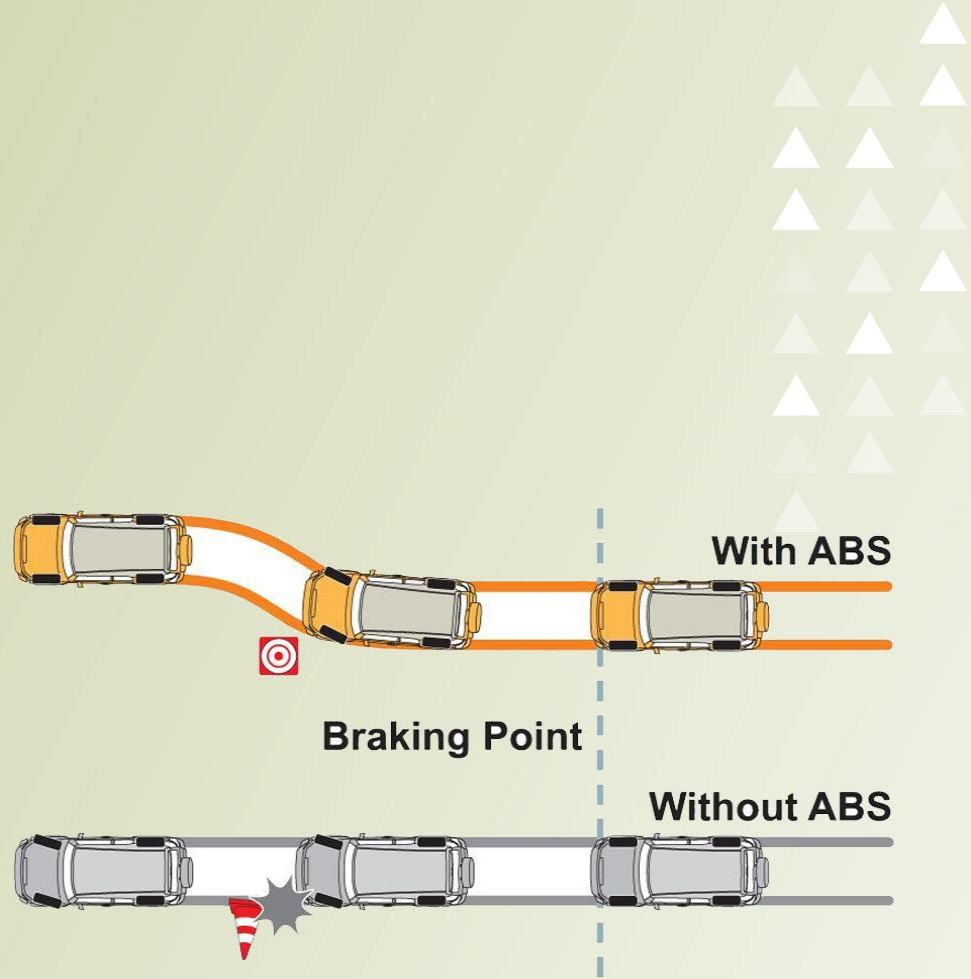


If you have an anti-lock braking system (ABS), when the brakes are pressed hard, the ABS pumps the brakes up to 30 times/sec. According to NHTSA, the ABS works with your regular braking system by automatically pumping them.



If your vehicle is not equipped with ABS, the driver has to manually pump the brakes to prevent wheel lockup.

In the ABS, this system helps you maintain control and stops the car in a straight line rather than spinning out of control. Focus on where you want the car to go.






ABS does not stop the car faster. It enables you to stop it where you want to by allowing you to concentrate on steering the car to safety.

To determine if your vehicle has ABS, check your owner's manual. You can also determine if you have ABS by checking your instrument panel. When you start your vehicle, the ABS light will illuminate and then dim. If you see an ABS indicator light then you have ABS. If the light stays lit, the ABS is not working correctly.

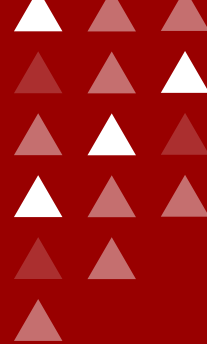


Turning quickly may be your only chance of avoiding a front end crash. If a crash looks probable, turn away from it even if it means leaving the road. Drive (rather than skid) off the road. Choose to hit something that will give way (such as brush or shrubs) rather than something hard.



A blue hatchback car is shown from a high-angle perspective, having crashed into a large, dense green bush. The car is angled towards the viewer, with its front end partially obscured by the foliage. The background shows a paved road with white dashed lines curving to the right, and a grassy area with some yellow flowers. In the top right corner, there is a decorative pattern of white and grey triangles. In the bottom right corner, there is a small white icon of a car with a speech bubble.

If you have to hit anything, try to make it a glancing blow. A sideswipe, for example, is better than a head-on crash. Never cross over into the oncoming traffic lane. The other driver may swerve back into his own lane.



Sometimes you may need to speed up quickly to avoid a crash. This may be the case when another car is about to hit you from the side or from behind. If your car has a manual shift, shift quickly into a lower gear and push the gas pedal to the floor. In any case, you may have only seconds to decide and act.

