Driving in the Dark



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WHAT'S AT STAKE
Most motor vehicle fatalities happen after dark, even though we drive less at night than in the daytime.

WHAT'S THE DANGER
The long hours of darkness can put us at greater risk for fatal crashes this time of year, as many of us commute both to and from work in the dark. In addition, our after-work errands, sports and other activities put us out in the traffic in the dark.

EXAMPLE
Darkness – combined with weather conditions such as rain, sleet, snow and fog – make it hard to see. Add other traffic, pedestrians and glare from streetlights and headlights, and you have the conditions for a serious motor vehicle crash.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

- Allow yourself more time to get to work. Besides the darkness, there may be the problem of frost to remove from the windshield.
- Check your driving lights and signal lights regularly to make sure they are working and clear of obstructions.
- Turn your headlights on as soon as the light begins to get dim.
- Use your low beams when you are following another vehicle or when a vehicle approaches from the opposite direction. When you blind the other driver with your high beams, you are endangering yourself.
- Look beyond your own headlights. Use streetlights and the lights of vehicles in front of you to get an idea of what is happening down the road.
- Leave an extra cushion of space around your vehicle at night, to allow more reaction time for yourself and other drivers.
- Observe warnings of animal crossings. Animals are most likely to be active around roads in the early morning and early evening.

- Impaired drivers are a danger to everyone on the road. Statistics suggest that one out of 13 drivers is drunk in the early morning hours, so give others plenty of space to maneuver.
- If you have vehicle trouble, pull as far off the road as you can. Warn other drivers with your four-way flashers, headlights, interior lights and flares if you have them.
- Walking to and from your vehicle in the dark can also put you at risk for injury. Walk carefully in well-lighted areas and stay alert.

FINAL WORD

Adjust your driving habits to accommodate the long hours of darkness this time of year. Leave yourself more time to travel and be alert to dangers on the road.