



The snow has finally melted and the nice weather is rolling in - that means spring is in the air! As the season's first warm sunlight begins to peek through the gloomy winter clouds, it's safe to say that everyone is at least a little reinvigorated with happiness. The relief of the new season is a great feeling, but it's important to keep in mind that the safety hazards of the winter aren't gone - in fact, new ones just take their place. Here are six safety tips you'll need to safely navigate the roads while driving in the spring.

1. PREPARE FOR THE SPRING RAINS

The hazards of rain are quite obvious but should never be ignored or brushed aside during springtime. More often than not, rain presents issues of visibility for drivers on the road. Rainy days and early, foggy mornings easily restrict your windshield vision, making it easier for you to find yourself in an accident. Without seeing clearly, you and your truck will be sitting on the side of the road until the storm passes - wasting valuable time. To ensure safe visibility, always have working windshield wipers and headlights so other drivers on the road can see you and you can see them.

2. AVOID HYDROPLANING

With rain comes the risk of hydroplaning. Some roads do not drain as well as others, leaving large puddles in the road. With the increased weight of freight trucks, this makes hydroplaning more dangerous. Hydroplaning occurs when the tires of your car lose their grip with the pavement, gliding and skidding atop the water - making it hard to brake. If a driver brakes too hard, the truck can even jackknife and lose total control. To avoid this entirely, be patient, maintain a safe speed and brake gradually when the conditions aren't driver-friendly.

3. WATCH FOR THE AFTERMATH OF WINTER

The winter just never seems to officially leave no matter what time of the year it is. Ironically considered some of winter's blessings, the spring is when potholes become a serious problem. Between the plows, salting and harsh

weather, potholes can grow to pretty impressive sizes. The best you can do is to avoid them at all costs before they're patched up. Driving over serious potholes can cause much unwanted damage underneath the vehicle.

4. EXPECT TEMPERATURE DROPS

Just when you thought you wouldn't see ice again for at least another 6 months, unexpected freezing can occur during the spring season as well. The temperature can still drop to just the perfect freezing conditions at nighttime in early spring. The seasonal spike in rainfall doesn't help, but just because it's warm during the day doesn't mean black ice can't form at night.

5. GIVE PEDESTRIANS THEIR SPACE

Closer to the middle of spring, you'll see more and more people outside enjoying the sunshine. While driving through residential areas make sure to be mindful of bikers and children playing outside. Drive slowly and give them space to avoid any unfortunate accidents from occurring.

6. WATCH FOR ANIMALS CROSSING THE ROAD

Even though animals are active at all times of the year, it's wise to have an eye out for any crossing the road no matter what. You should always be prepared to brake and not swerve out of the way. It's best to be ready to react instead of reacting off last second impulse, which will only cause an additional potential road hazard.

Commuting by Bicycle

Drive where you are expected to be seen, travel in the same direction as traffic and signal and look over your shoulder before changing lane position or turning. Avoid or minimize sidewalk riding. Cars don't expect to see moving traffic on a sidewalk and don't look for you when backing out of a driveway or turning.

When commuting by bike, you can stay safe by following the rules of the road, wearing protective gear, and being aware of your surroundings.

Follow the rules of the road.

- Obey traffic signals and stop signs.
- Ride with the flow of traffic.
- Keep a safe distance from parked cars.
- Give pedestrians the right of way.

- Cross railroad tracks at a right angle
- Walk your bike in crosswalks.

Wear protective gear.

- Wear a helmet to protect your head.

- Wear bright clothing during the day.
- Wear reflective gear at night or in low visibility.
- Use a white front light and red rear light on your bike.

Get Out and Play!

10 sports tips for children and teens

As part of your family's commitment to spring sports, take a few minutes to review these ten tips from the Orthopedics and Sports Medicine team with your child or teen:

- Get plenty of sleep.
- Avoid skipping meals.
- Have a pre-practice/game snack and re-fuel afterwards.
- Stay hydrated! Make sure you are hydrated going into practice/game and staying hydrated during activity, especially with warmer weather.
- Complete a proper dynamic warm-up and cool down with stretching.
- Listen to your body and know when to stop. If you are tired, feeling ill or something is hurting, listen to your body to prevent a more serious problem from developing.
- Stay conditioned throughout the year by getting physical activity every day. Too much activity, too fast, can lead to an injury.
- Take breaks from year-round sports. To avoid burnout and overuse, vary physical activity throughout the year and take a break from a year-long sport. You can still be active, but give your body parts a break - overuse of the same body part can be bad. Avoid repetitive overuse and possible injury.
- See a health care provider if you experience early signs of an injury. Seeking medical care early can help avoid injuries from becoming more serious. Seeking care early can lead to less time missed.
- Most importantly, have fun! Sports should be fun and enjoyable. If sports become a source of frustration, stress or injury, it may be time to take a break or explore a different activity.

Lawnmowers

Each spring and summer, hospitals see the results of injuries caused by power lawn mowers. Increasingly, research shows that these injuries are more frequent and serious in rural regions, affecting younger children compared to urban areas. Many of these incidents result in painful injuries, loss of fingers, toes and even eyes. Below are a few recommendations to protect you from getting hurt. Good lawn mower maintenance coupled with these safety tips can ensure that the grass is the only thing that gets cut.



Created by NP Acts from the Noun Project

Safety Tips

Children and Lawn Mowers

- Children should not be allowed on or near a lawn mower when it's in use. They should never be permitted to walk along side, in front of or behind a moving mower. Rocks and other debris often can shoot out of a lawn mower while it is running.
- The AAP recommend that a child be 12 years of age to operate a power mower.
- Children under 5 years of age should be kept indoors during mowing. They can behave unpredictably and might run into the mower's path.
- Don't allow children to play on or around a lawn mower, even when it's not in use - they need to learn that lawn mowers aren't toys.
- Inspect the area to be mowed for stones, tree branches, nails and wires - these objects can be picked up by the mower and expelled at bullet-like speeds, causing serious injury.
- Don't cut wet grass.
- Always push the mower forward, never pull it backward toward you. A sloping lawn should be mowed across, never up and down. When the mower is pushed from the bottom of the hill, it could roll back on the operator's feet. When the mower is being pulled from the top of

the hill, the operator's feet could easily slip under the mower.

- Never drink alcoholic beverages and operate a lawn mower.
- Work clothes such as steel-toed shoes with sure-grip soles and long pants should be worn to minimize injury.
- When using a gas-powered lawn mower, never refuel when the engine is running. Turn off the engine and let it cool first.
- When using an electric lawn mower, make sure the extension cord is not cut or frayed and is the right gauge for the electrical current. A ground fault circuit interrupter cord is helpful as well.

Riding Mowers

- Riding mowers were not meant for passengers; carrying children or other adults invites the potential for falling under the mower and sustaining serious injuries.
- The AAP recommend that a child be 16 years of age to operate a riding mower.
- Carts are not meant for passengers, either. A cart can easily tip over, and riders can be seriously hurt.
- When mowing in reverse, remember to look behind you for potential danger or bystanders.
- A sloping lawn should be mowed up and down when using a riding mower, to prevent rollover.

Seat Belts - Let's Get Them On!

One of the safest choices drivers and passengers can make is to buckle Up. Many Americans understand the lifesaving value of the seat belt - The national use rate was at 91% in 2023.

Seat belt use in passenger vehicles saved an estimated

14,955 lives in 2017. Understand the potentially fatal consequences of not wearing a seat belt and learn what you can do to make sure you and every family member is properly buckled up every time.

Source: <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/813543>

Prevention Works is the official biannual newsletter of Northern NJ SAFE KIDS/Safe Communities.

We welcome articles of interest highlighting your community or organization.

Let us know how you have made your community a safe community.

If you have any comments or topics you would like to see covered, please feel

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