

**The following text provides comprehensive guidance on factors to consider before driving, emphasizing the importance of clear vision, alertness, physical and mental fitness, and minimizing distractions. It covers aspects such as vision and hearing requirements, the impact of fatigue and health conditions, emotional states, and the significance of maintaining a distraction-free environment. Additionally, it stresses the importance of vehicle maintenance and safety checks to ensure safe driving conditions, highlighting various components such as brakes, lights, tires, steering, and exhaust systems.**

**BEFORE YOU DRIVE** Being a safe driver depends on being able to see clearly, not being overly tired, not driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs, being generally healthy, and being mentally and emotionally fit to drive. There are many environmental sights and sounds to be aware of while driving such as weather, time of the day, lighting conditions, honking, sirens, screeching tires, people shouting, etc. Using all of your available senses to assist you with alertness and awareness of one's surroundings can help warn you of danger.

**Vision:** Good vision is a must for safe driving. You drive based on what you see. If you cannot see clearly without corrective lenses, you may have trouble identifying traffic and road conditions, spotting potential hazards, recognizing smaller road users like pedestrians or bicyclists and reacting in a timely manner. It is important to have your eyes checked every year or two by an eye specialist. If you have a corrective lens restriction on your license, you need to wear glasses or contact lenses while driving.

**Hearing:** While your hearing levels can be helpful to alert you to your surroundings, it must be noted the ability to hear (or not) does not guarantee you will hear environmental sounds. Music may be playing, passengers may be talking, and/or the car may be so well-insulated to the outside world that environmental sounds are muted. It is also common for people to experience declines in their hearing levels as they age and/or due to exposure to loud noises. These declines can happen so slowly that a person may not immediately notice an issue. If you suspect that your hearing levels have declined, it is recommended you have your hearing tested by an audiologist. Note — You may not operate a motor vehicle while wearing earphones. The definition of earphones include any device or headset which covers all or a portion of both ears. Earphones do not include hearing aids, cochlear implants, assistive listening devices, speakers or other listening devices that are built into protective headgear or a device that only covers all or a portion of one ear and that is connected to a wireless device.

**Fatigue:** When you are tired, you cannot drive as safely as when you are rested. Your reactions and decision making skills are greatly reduced. Break long driving periods into two-hour segments. If you become drowsy, pull off the road and rest.

**Health:** Many health problems, such as a bad cold, infection or a virus, can affect your driving. Even little problems such as a stiff neck, cough or sore leg can affect your driving. Some conditions, such as epilepsy, diabetes and heart conditions can pose risks that make it unsafe to drive a vehicle. Check with your doctor if you think your health condition could affect your driving.

**Emotions:** Emotions can greatly affect safe driving. You may not drive well if you are overly worried, excited, afraid or angry. Do not give in to road rage.

**Colorado Driver Handbook 6 Distractions:** Distractions are the leading cause of driver error. A distraction is anything that takes away your attention, even momentarily, from the task of driving. Driving requires your full attention. Before beginning a trip, adjust your seat, mirrors, radio, temperature and secure any loose objects in the car. Be sure everyone in the vehicle, particularly children, are wearing age-appropriate restraint devices. Do not allow yourself to become distracted by your cell phone, conversations with passengers, children or rubbernecking (staring at something of interest). Safely pull over to address distracting or urgent situations.

**Vehicle:** The vehicle you drive impacts your ability to drive safely. Motorists are responsible to ensure the vehicles they drive are safe to operate. A vehicle in poor operating

condition is unsafe, costs more to drive and can cause an emergency situation, such as a breakdown or wreck. It can also result in a citation from law enforcement. Follow your vehicle owner's manual for routine maintenance. A few simple checks will prevent trouble on the road and ensure your vehicle complies with Colorado motor vehicle laws:

- **Braking system:** If the brakes do not seem to be working properly, have a mechanic check them immediately.
- **Lights:** Make sure turn signals, brake lights, tail lights and headlights are operating properly.
- **Windshield and wipers:** Get your windshield replaced if the glass is damaged because damaged glass can break easily or obstruct vision. Windshield wipers keep the rain and snow off the windshield. Make sure they are in good operating condition. If the blades have not been working well, replace them. Keep the windshield clean inside and out, and keep your window washer fluid tank full. Clear snow, ice or frost from all windows.
- **Tires:** Worn or bald tires can increase your stopping distance, make turning more difficult, can cause hydroplaning when the road is wet, and increase the chance of having a flat tire. Unbalanced wheels and low tire pressure increase tire wear, reduce fuel economy and make the vehicle harder to steer and stop. If the vehicle bounces, the steering wheel shakes, or the vehicle pulls to one side, have a mechanic check your tires.
- **Steering system:** If the vehicle is hard to turn, have the steering checked by a mechanic.
- **Suspension system:** If the vehicle bounces excessively, keeps bouncing after a bump or after you stop, you may need new shocks or other suspension parts. Have a mechanic check it out.
- **Exhaust system:** Fumes from a leaky exhaust system can cause death in a very short time. Never run the motor in your garage or sit in the car with the motor running without opening a window. Most exhaust problems are easily heard; have them repaired.
- **Engine:** A poorly tuned engine can lose power needed for normal driving and emergencies, may not start, get poor fuel economy, pollute the air, and could stall on you when you are on the road, causing problems for you and other traffic.
- **Horn:** The horn should be checked regularly.
- **Mirrors:** Adjust your rear view mirror and side mirrors before you begin to drive. To adjust the driver's side mirror place your head against the left side window and set the mirror so you can barely see the side of the car in the left side of the mirror. To adjust the passenger's side mirror position your head so that it is centered under the inside rearview mirror or just above the center console. Set the mirror so you can just see the side of the car in the right side of the mirror.
- **Loose objects:** Make sure there are no objects on the rear shelf or back seat that could injure someone during a sudden stop or crash. Ensure there are no objects on the floor that could roll under the brake pedal or accelerator and interfere with your safe driving.
- **Head rests:** They should be adjusted so the head restraint touches the back of your head.