



high-risk driving

Driving is a complex task that requires your full attention. Most crashes are preventable and can be avoided by making smart driving decisions.

How big a problem is high-risk driving? Consider these facts:

- In B.C., on average 143 people die in crashes involving high-risk driving each year.*
- In B.C., on average, more than 53,000 people are injured in crashes at intersections each year.
- About 60 per cent of all crashes in B.C. take place in intersections—that's 226 every day.**

Tips for getting through intersections safely

When approaching a traffic light

- Even if the light is green as you're approaching the intersection, be prepared for it to change to yellow. That way you'll be able to stop in time.
- One way to anticipate the light changing: check the pedestrian signals. In many newer intersections, the crosswalk signal will change from a white figure to an orange hand just before the light turns yellow, or will count down the seconds left before the traffic light changes.
- If the light changes to yellow as you approach the intersection, slow down and stop before the intersection unless you can't safely stop in time.
- Only go through a yellow light if it's unsafe to stop.
- Don't change lanes in an intersection. Make sure you're always in the correct lane before making a turn.

When turning at an intersection

- Always use your turn signals well before you make a move—it helps other drivers, cyclists and pedestrians know what you're doing.
- Be prepared to yield to pedestrians, cyclists or other vehicles when making a turn

- Check for motorcycles coming through the intersection. They're often difficult to see, and their speed and intentions aren't easy to judge.
- Don't panic if the light turns yellow while you're waiting in an intersection to make a left turn. You are legally allowed to complete your turn once it's safe to do so. Watch carefully for other vehicles, especially oncoming drivers trying to beat the red light.

When stopped at an intersection

- If you're the first car to stop—make sure you're behind the stop bar, or the first line of the crosswalk.
- Always leave sufficient space between you and the vehicle in front—a good rule is to leave enough space so you can see its wheels (about a car length).
- Keep your wheels straight when stopped, even if you're waiting to turn.
- When the light turns green, check that the intersection is clear before you move forward—and that no one is running the red or jumping the green (counting to three works well).

Most common driving behaviours associated with high-risk driving

Failing to yield

Yielding right-of-way helps everyone safely share the road. It's about watching for other road users and making safe decisions about when to let others go first.

- It may not always be easy to decide who has the right-of-way at intersections. Signs and traffic signals often help determine who needs to yield to whom.
- Don't count on others to obey the rules of the road—or to make allowances for you.
- Look for—and expect to see—pedestrians, cyclists and motorcycles, and be prepared to stop and yield the right of way to them.

*Five-year average, police-reported fatal victims 2009–2013.

**Five-year average, ICBC-reported incidents 2009–2013.

Ignoring traffic control devices

It can seem tempting to roll through a stop sign or other traffic control device. But doing so puts you and others at risk.

- If you're approaching a light that's been green for a while, slow down and be prepared for the light to change.
- Remember that yellow lights mean stop unless it's unsafe to do so.
- Be sure to come to a complete stop at stop signs and red lights, even when turning right.

Following too closely

Tailgating not only leaves you less room to stop in an emergency, it increases your risk of being rear-ended by another vehicle if you have to stop suddenly.

- Always leave a safe following distance—it gives you more time to react to the unexpected.
- You need a following distance of at least two seconds in good weather and road conditions, and at least three seconds when you're behind a large vehicle that can block your vision, or a motorcycle that can stop very quickly.

Speeding

Speeding reduces your reaction time, and the faster you go, the longer it takes to stop.

Tips for drivers

- Speed is one of the most frequently cited contributing factors in police-reported car crashes. You need time to see and react before your brakes take effect and slow you down.
- Slowing down and being more realistic about travel times can reduce your risk of getting in a crash. Give yourself extra time to get to your destination so you don't feel the need to rush.
- The speed limit is for optimal conditions only. The speed you're going should be relative to the road and weather conditions.

Tips for motorcyclists

- Many motorcycle crashes happen at curves—remember to take extra care when entering one.
- Plan your path through the curve, and adjust your speed and lane position—it reduces the risk of crossing into other lanes or off onto the shoulder. By looking where you want to go, you can get there safely.

Improper passing

Passing can be dangerous, especially when your line of sight is obscured.

- If you're planning to pass, make sure you do it safely and legally. Keep within the speed limit and communicate clearly by using your signals.
- Avoid passing on the right and ensure you can see the vehicle you've passed in your mirrors before pulling back in front of it.
- Pass only if there is no oncoming traffic.
- Before you pass a vehicle, be sure to signal, mirror check, and shoulder check.
- Always stop and yield to school buses, watch for children, and drive very slowly around parked school buses.



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