

NIGHT VISION

There is a lot more on the road than meets the eye. This is especially true at night. It is all too easy to forget that night-driving presents a whole new set of hazards. Nobody is perfect and our visual imperfections are increased with the onset of darkness. Close to 30,000 people, including 9,400 pedestrians, are killed each year on the road at night. Many of these collisions occur from 4:00 AM to 7:00 AM, which is a time of day most of us do not think of as nighttime driving. Ninety percent of our driving cues are visual, and at night we can't see these cues as well or at all. These visual cues include depth perception, reaction time, color, and peripheral vision. Again, all of these senses are diminished by darkness. Lastly the possibility of fatigue is a factor. Night driving requires increased alertness and extra care.

What are some potential problems for night drivers?

- Smoking reduces night vision by 10 percent.
- Drinking alcohol decreases the oxygen supply to the eyes reducing vision.
- Dirty windshield, windows and headlights can add to the danger of nighttime driving.
- Age – drivers over the age of 40 require about 150% more light to see the same as those under the age of 40. We can't stop aging but we can be aware of the problem and increase our level of caution as we grow older.
- Drivers tend to over drive their headlights, which is basically going too fast for conditions and what they can see. Typically high beams allow a person to see 350 to 500 feet ahead of their vehicle. However it can take longer than this distance to stop at certain speeds

How does a driver reduce hazards at night?

- Drive the posted speed limit or less depending on conditions. Hazardous conditions can include very dark areas, unfamiliar roads, rain, fog, heavy traffic, and fatigue.
- Don't over drive your headlights.
- Increase your following distance between vehicles. This gives you more time and space to react should they brake or come to a sudden stop.
- Ensure your windshield and headlights are clean.
- Consider avoiding night driving if possible.

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