



# Fleet Administration Quarterly Newsletter

SUMMER 2018

IN THIS ISSUE

## Backing Safety

by Brian Reynolds

Drivers spend less than 1% of their time backing up, but a surprising 30 to 40% of all accidents happen when vehicles are in reverse.

Driving in reverse is hazardous for several reasons. For starters, your visibility is extremely limited. Typically, when you're driving, your body is facing the same direction that you are moving, but when backing up, you're looking through a window that's behind you or using mirrors.

Since you're usually not traveling at a very high rate of speed, or going a long distance, it's easy to take safety for granted. After all, What can go wrong?

Driving in reverse also affects how well you can maneuver your vehicle since your front axle normally leads the car or truck, the rear wheels only follow. Putting the vehicle in reverse changes that dynamic entirely.

Adopting Best Practices for Reverse Driving

### No. 1: Plan Ahead

This means looking for parking spaces that won't require you to back out of them. Avoiding backing up completely eliminates the concern of backing collisions, so try to find a pull-through spot, even if it means you

might have to walk farther once you've parked.

### No. 2: Get Out and Look (GOAL)

Backing accidents typically happen for one of two reasons: the driver didn't see an object, or they misjudged the distance between their vehicle and another object. Before putting your light- or medium-duty vehicle into reverse, know what's around you. Know exactly what to expect.

### No. 3: Be Aware

In any traffic situation — and particularly in parking lots — things are changing constantly. Keeping your eyes moving and watching for what is happening in front, beside and around you can give you the time to react if there's a problem.

### No. 4: Make Sure They See You

Look for people and cars who aren't looking for you; they may be walking or driving behind your vehicle and not paying attention as you are pulling out or backing out. Use mirrors and backup cameras to help see what's behind you, and give a friendly honk of the horn if you realize that they aren't paying attention.



### Teen Drivers

It's summer, teens are on the road Page 2

### 3 Types of Distracted Driving

What's distracting you? Page 3

### Specialty Equipment

When you need to do it Page 3



© Can Stock Photo

### Top Ten Fuel Saving Tips

Gasbuddy.com Page 4

# Summer is Teen Driver Season

by Brian Reynolds



Car crashes are the number 1 cause of death for teens. In the most recent data available from 2015, there were 3,327 teen motor vehicle deaths.

Teen deaths in car crashes are attributable to several factors including inexperience, distractions, speeding, failure to use seat belts, and impaired driving.

Inexperience is the leading cause of teen crashes. Teens are like the rest of us, when we are learning something, we will make errors along the way. The best way to overcome this is by practice – with an experienced driver riding and monitoring their progress.

Distractions can be electronic, including handheld devices, infotainment systems in the vehicle, or other media. They can also be the passengers in the vehicle with an inexperienced teen driver. Friends, siblings, and even parents can be a distraction in the vehicle.

Speeding is one that seems obvious, but may be trickier to spot than you think. While speeding for thrills or racing is clearly unacceptable and really not all that common, your teen may be speeding in other forms and creating a risk that they don't realize.

It is very likely that we have all hurried when conditions are not optimal on the roads. Inexperienced teens may not be able to react or judge conditions well enough to know when it's time to slow down. You know that when visibility is poor and roads are slippery, reducing your speed below the limit gives you more control over the car. That's something you learned from experience—experience your teen doesn't yet have.



Although most Americans (about 88.5 percent) wear seat belts, there still a sizable number who don't—despite being widely proven to save lives. Plus, we all know we need to click it to avoid that ticket.

Teens are the population group least likely to wear their seat belts. It should come as no surprise to learn that most of the teens killed in car crashes were not wearing seat belts.

Nothing good happens when any driver has a few drinks and gets behind the wheel. When it's an inexperienced driver, the risk is even greater. That's why, in all 50 states, there are zero tolerance laws for underage drinking and driving.

Additional caution needs to be encouraged regarding over the counter medications and impact they can have on drivers. Again, teens may not have the experience to recognize being impaired, even if it is only a little drowsiness from a "safe" medication, the effects can be deadly. The safest strategy for any driver—especially teens—is to avoid any substance that leads to impaired driving, including legal drugs.

There is another type of impairment that drivers face and one that is especially dangerous for teens – fatigued or drowsy driving

Other impairments like alcohol or drugs—especially prescription or over the counter medications—can cause drowsiness, but more often than not, it comes down to getting (or not getting) enough sleep.

A tired driver is a dangerous driver. There are hundreds of known fatalities related to drowsy driving each year and far more incidents involving injuries and property damage. This is a serious issue and parents and teens need to keep a few things in mind.

Like many of us (and maybe even more than some adults), teens have busy schedules. There's school, homework and hanging out with friends and family. Your teen is probably involved in extracurricular activities at school and they might even have a job, too. With all that, going on, is your teen getting enough rest before hitting the road?



Teens need 8-10 hours of sleep every night to function at their best, but most aren't getting that much. That can be deadly if they get into a car.

As adults, and experienced drivers, we need to work to keep our teens safe on the road. For some of us that may be teaching the younger drivers while for others it is simply remaining alert of our own surroundings and making sure we do everything we can to avoid the mistakes they may make.

# Three Types of Distracted Driving?

by Brian Reynolds (Excerpted from the Smith System blog)

Distracted driving is defined as any activity that can divert a person’s attention away from the primary task of driving. According to the Department of Motor Vehicles, there are three primary types of driving distractions: visual, manual and cognitive.

## Visual Distractions

Visual driving distractions cause you to take your eyes off the road. Examples include activities such as checking your GPS or navigation system, looking to see what song is playing on the radio, and searching for mirror or temperature controls or lost items on the floor of your vehicle.

## Manual Distractions

Manual distractions are defined as distractions that cause you to take your hands off of the wheel, such as eating, drinking, smoking, checking your phone, adjusting the radio or setting a destination in your vehicle’s in-dash navigation system.

## Cognitive Distractions

Cognitive distractions take your focus and concentration away from driving. This could be anything from talking to other passengers in the vehicle to road rage or driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol. Stress and fatigue are also a factor.

Drowsy or fatigued driving is a form of cognitive distraction that is suspected to contribute to more than 100,000 crashes each year — including 40,000 injuries and some 1,550 deaths. Many experts feel that these crashes are under-reported, and the actual numbers may be much higher.

Distracted drivers are also less likely to safely respond to adverse roadways and weather conditions by failing to recognize hazards and reacting too slowly to changing traffic conditions.



Two of the most common distractions — talking on cell phones or texting while driving — are especially dangerous because they fall under all three types of distracted driving. Many states have enacted laws making it illegal to use the phone behind the wheel — even for hands-free calls — and texting while driving is illegal in most states. Federal law prohibits all commercial drivers from using hand-held mobile devices while driving.

## How to Avoid Distractions

Driving requires your full attention, and the best way to avoid distractions is to stay focused and keep your hands on the wheel and your eyes on the road.

Of course, drivers should avoid eating and smoking while driving and should never drive under the influence of drugs or alcohol, but other best practices include pulling over to read directions or setting navigation systems before you start driving.

Using radio pre-sets eliminates the need to tune to your favorite channels, and all adjustments to mirrors, seats and steering should be made prior to getting on the road.

To avoid the temptation of taking phone calls and answering texts and e-mails from behind the wheel, drivers should set their phones to “Do Not Disturb” and turn off the ringer while driving. It is also a good habit to keep your phone out of reach while you are in the car.

## POLICY NOTES

At no time may a County vehicle be used for personal gain, personal business, to drive to a place of secondary or part-time employment not related to County business, or for any other non-County-related use.

All drivers of County vehicles, and those using their personal vehicles on County business, shall comply with all applicable State and local laws. It will be the responsibility of the official/employee to pay any fines imposed for not complying with such laws.

Seat belts shall be worn and secured at all times when the vehicle is moving.

The use of tobacco is prohibited in all County vehicles.

The current Smith County Vehicle Policy can be found [here](#) on the Smith County website. Watch for updates.

# Specialty Equipment

by Brian Reynolds

County vehicles are often specialized for unique or, at a minimum, very specific purposes. I will regularly share some of the interesting facts about various types of equipment we use.

Smith County Animal Control Office vehicles used to transport animals utilize boxes designed to protect both the animal and the officer. These specialty units are designed and built specific for this purpose and can cost in excess of \$10,000 per truck.



# GasBuddy.com Top Ten Fuel Saving Tips

© 2018 GasBuddy, LLC All rights reserved

**1. Avoid High Speeds**

As your speed increases, your aerodynamic drag increases in an exponential fashion. Driving 62 mph (100 km/h) vs 75 mph (120 km/h) will reduce fuel consumption by about 15%.

**2. Do Not Accelerate or Brake Hard**

By anticipating the traffic and applying slow steady acceleration and braking, fuel economy may increase by as much as 20%.

**3. Keep Tires Properly Inflated**

Keep tire air pressure at the level recommended by your vehicle manufacturer. A single tire under inflated by 2 PSI, increases fuel consumption by 1%.

**4. Use A/C Sparingly**

When the air conditioner is on it puts extra load on the engine forcing more fuel to be used (by about 20%). The defrost position on most vehicles also uses the air conditioner.

**5. Keep Windows Closed**

Windows open, especially at highway speeds, increase drag and result in decreased fuel economy of up to 10%.

**6. Service Vehicle Regularly**

Proper maintenance avoids poor fuel economy related to dirty air filters, old spark plugs or low fluid levels.

**7. Use Cruise Control**

Maintaining a constant speed over long distances often saves gas.

**8. Avoid Heavy Loads**

Remove the unnecessary items from your trunk and pack lightly for long trips.

**9. Avoid Long Idles**

If you anticipate being stopped for more than 1 minute, shut off the car. Restarting the car uses less fuel than letting it idle for this time.

**10. Purchase a Fuel Efficient Vehicle**

When buying a new vehicle examine the vehicle's rated fuel efficiency. Usually choosing a newer vehicle will provide you with great fuel economy.

**Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Facts**

EPA's annual report shows model year (MY) 2016 fuel economy is at a record high and CO2 emissions are at a record low. This is in spite of the resurgent popularity of light-duty trucks and SUV's.

Model year 2016 fuel economy averaged 24.7 mpg, and CO2 emissions averaged 359 grams per mile.

Fuel economy has increased by 5.4 mpg, or 28%, since MY 2004.

<https://www.epa.gov/fuel-economy-trends>

**1 Gallon per Hour**

...is the approximate amount of fuel used when a vehicle's engine is idling. While that may not seem like a lot, it adds up quickly. Only 5 minutes a day each weekday is over 20 gallons of fuel per year.

**Fleet Administration Quarterly Newsletter**

Smith County Fleet Administration  
200 E Ferguson Street  
Tyler, TX 75702

Brian Reynolds  
[breyolds@smith-county.com](mailto:breyolds@smith-county.com)  
Office: 903-590-1717

Smith County government is composed of 48 departments, including 26 headed by elected officials, with the county auditor having been appointed by the District Judges, and 12 appointees by the Commissioners Court. Smith County has approximately 800 staff positions.

County services and responsibilities include:

- Building and maintaining county roads.
- Operating the Judicial system.
- Registering voters and holding elections.
- Maintaining public records.
- Participation in economic development incentive and programs.
- Providing health and social services to the indigent.
- Assisting Veterans and their dependents w/ benefit/entitlement claims
- Providing law enforcement.
- Building and operating jails.
- Issuing vehicle registrations.
- Collection of property and sales taxes

Fleet Administration was formed as a department in 2017 to administer the Smith County fleet policies and manage the vehicle assets and related equipment. As a support department Fleet Administration is responsible to ensure that the delegated Smith County funds provide the vehicle resources that will help all departments serve the community with excellence.