

Fact Sheet



Vehicle Breakdown Safety A Safeguard for Driver and Passengers.

Best practices when stranded on the side of the highway.

When your car breaks down and you are stranded on the highway or the freeway, safety isn't usually the first thing you think of. When your car stops working on the freeway it is one of the most uncomfortable, nail-biting and dangerous experiences that you can have. Breakdowns are not only inconvenient, but in these dangerous times, a breakdown can be life-threatening as well. As highways and freeways are prone to high speeds, the inattention of other drivers, and sometime unlawful intentions by some, it becomes more important that we always ensure our car is properly maintained and that we have enough energy and or fuel in our vehicles to reduce the risk of a breakdown or running out of fuel. No matter how careful and prepared we are, sometimes we will experience a breakdown.

The Utah State Fire Marshal and the Utah Highway Patrol encourage drivers to be prepared, alert and attentive when driving and please consider the following before and when a break down happens and you are stranded:

Maintain Your Vehicle & Be Prepared:

- Maintain each of your vehicles in proper running order.
 - Lubricate your vehicle regularly.
 - Service your vehicle at proper intervals.
 - Repair and maintain your vehicles to the highest standards your pocket-book will allow.
 - Make sure tires are safe and properly pressurized.
- Add these safety tools to your vehicle:
 - Safety triangle reflectors
 - Flash/Emergency lights with batteries (Separate batteries)
 - Tire sealant
 - First Aid Kit
 - Five pound fire extinguisher
 - Battery charge cables
 - Tow strap or cable
 - Simple tool set
- Always carry a charged cell-phone within your reach in the car. Phone contacts should include:
 - Easy access 9.1.1
 - Family member phone numbers
 - Emergency contact information
 - Towing concerns numbers
 - Insurance agent & information
 - Auto repair & auto body shops
- Emergency Preparedness Pack
 - Warm Coat(s), Hat(s), Gloves,
 - Rain slicker(s) & Umbrella(s)
 - Warm blanket(s) air pillows
 - Comfort food & drink, (energy bars, candy, gum, water etc.)
 - Reading material

Always walk around your car before you enter the vehicle to leave. Insure children, pets or implements are not in the path of exit as you back out into the street.

**Always, let family and or friends know
where you are going.**

**As personal electronic devices and simple
inattention plagues the driving public,
roadways become a maze of dangers. Drive
carefully; Extreme caution must ever be
used to avoid accident, injury or a fatality.**

Best Practices:

- When the car starts having trouble, immediately turn your *hazard lights* on. Start maneuvering your car preferably to the right side of the road; however if you can only go left, then go to the left side of the road and park well out of the lanes of traffic.
- A freeway breakdown could be as simple as a tire blow out or your car dies, but whatever the situation, your *hazard lights* will let other drivers around you know that your vehicle is having trouble and help give them time to slow down and prepare for your vehicle's resulting outcome and position.
- When your car comes to a stop, leave your seat belt attached with the windows closed and your doors locked.
- Using your cell phone *call 9.1.1* for help immediately. Follow the dispatcher's instructions. *Ensure that you stress the fact your car has broken-down and that you are vulnerable.* It is appropriate to ask for the Utah Highway Patrol and an Incident Management Truck if available, to come to your aid (This is imperative especially if you are blocking lanes of traffic). Let the 9.1.1 operator know exactly where you are located.
- Once 9.1.1 is alerted, you may then call family, road side assistance, your preferred tow provider and repair shop while waiting for emergency vehicles to arrive. Gather and secure your valuables at this time as well.
- If you have not managed to move your car to the shoulder of the road and you are worried it might be hit by another car, get out of your vehicle when it is safe to do so and walk carefully to the side of the road. Ideally, you would remain in your car with the windows rolled up and the doors locked.

- Simple repairs and changing tires are appropriate on the side of the roadway, however, if major repairs are required, call for a tow truck.
- Do not open the hood/bonnet of your car as this will block your view and you will not be able to see if anyone approaches your vehicle.
- Watch and wait for professional assistance.

**Do not stand by the side of the
freeway to flag-down motorist.
Because you are stranded on the
highway does not mean people will see
you're there or avoid hitting you.**

- If you are on a highway miles away from help, once traffic is clear and it appears safe, it is time to place your safety triangle signs to the rear of your vehicle at the appropriate distances as per the instructions. Make sure your hazard lights are flashing.
- If you desire to flag down a driver, consider putting up the hood/bonnet of the car to attract attention. Get back in the car, roll up the windows and lock the doors. Usually, tow truck drivers, truckers and good Samaritans will stop to help.
Be aware that in today's dangerous environment this act may be risky and ill-advised.

Fire Protection

- If your vehicle appears to be on fire, pull to the side of the roadway and if possible release the hood mechanism before you exit the vehicle. Your extinguisher and gloves should be in the trunk of the vehicle for use. Call 9.1.1

**The Office of the Utah State Fire Marshal & the
Utah Highway Patrol provide safety information
for your consideration. For more information
contact:**

Oliver C. Moore
Deputy State Fire Marshal

801-284-6349 or omooore@utah.gov