

TABLE OF CONTENTS:

WINTER DRIVING

FOGGY DRIVING

DEER SAFETY

POISON OAK

USR SAFETY TIP

WINTER DRIVING

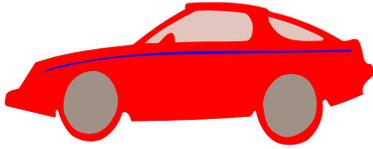
As we move into the winter months, one thing remains constant; the hours of darkness will exceed the hours of daylight until next spring. While that may be fine for bats and other nocturnal animals, humans prefer the daylight. At night our visual acuity drops (we don't see as well) and, partly because of that, we don't react as fast or as early to potential danger. Couple that with our winter weather (rain, fog, snow, ice) and you get a dangerous, and often deadly, combination. Not satisfied with these dangers alone, we here at Vandenberg add another ingredient to the mix by wearing BDUs and flight suits. While functional, our required duty attire doesn't exactly stand out in the dark.

All these factors conspire to create an accident. The daily commute, a dangerous enough proposition in the daylight, only gets worse during the winter months. Drivers need to increase their awareness, particularly their awareness of pedestrians. Please be especially cautious at intersections, corners, and around crosswalks since these are the place pedestrians are most likely to step out into traffic. In addition, keep an eagle eye out on the flightline.

While folks are supposed to have reflective belts and/or flashlights on the flightline, we've noticed on a few occasions people are "forgetting" to put them on. If you're required to wear a reflective belt, please do so. You might even think about wearing it off the flightline as well (just in the interest of safety).

Remember, winter means more darkness, earlier...so protect yourself. Drive with a little extra caution. Give yourself plenty of time for the trip (even the daily commute to work) and watch out for those pedestrians. For those on foot, do something to make yourself be seen (clothes, reflective gear/belts, flashlights) and use extreme caution when crossing streets! Let's all be careful out there.

FOGGY DRIVE



Fog is heaviest around cities and industrial areas, in the valleys and along coasts. It can be every bit as treacherous as rain and snow, so it pays to listen to weather and highway reports, in case heavy fog will affect your trip. You might want to change your route or even postpone/delay your trip. Here are some tips to make your drive in the fog as safe as possible.

Slow Down - No matter how careful you are, poor visibility is a hazard. If you must drive, reduce your speed according to how far ahead you can see. If you can see only six car lengths ahead, slow to 20-30 miles per hours. If visibility is reduced to two car lengths, slow to 10-15 miles per hour. The idea is to drive slowly enough so you can stop in whatever distance you see ahead. If this means driving more than 15 miles per hour below the posted speed limit, turn on your emergency flashers. Increase your following distance to three or four seconds behind the vehicle in front of you depending on conditions. Distances are hard to judge in fog, so give yourself extra time to respond to any road hazards. Never pass another vehicle in the fog unless you're sure it's safe (and it's absolutely necessary), and make left turns with extreme caution, putting your head out the window to check first if necessary.

Make the Most of Limited Visibility – Turn on your low beam lights and four-way flashers in the fog, even if you use fog lights. Heavy fog also causes mist on the windshield that you might not notice. Run your wipers occasionally and keep your defroster going, making sure there are no objects on the dashboard that might block the heat from the defroster. Keep all front and rear car lights clean. Hunching forward over the steering wheel and peering forward does not improve your view of the road. It will make you tense and fatigued. You'll actually drive more safely if you relax and sit back in a normal driving position.

Don't Take Chances – Fog can get so dense that you can't see the road at all. If this happens, pull over until the fog lifts, signal your exit, flash your brake light several times to warn cars behind you that you're going to stop and get well off the road. Stay in your car with your emergency flashers going and your safety belts on. Once the fog lifts enough to continue, enter traffic carefully, and drive slowly with your window open to hear other vehicles that you may not see. Use the curb or shoulder of the road as a guide, if necessary.

DEER SAFETY



Motorists need to heighten their awareness of deer during the fall breeding season," said Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Secretary John R. Griffin. "Deer do not stop and look both ways when they cross a highway. Collisions automobiles result in a substantial cost, including damage to vehicles, the loss of a valuable wildlife resource and human injuries or fatalities. Recent reports indicate that more than 400,000 deer/vehicle collisions occur annually on our nation's highways. Reported deer/vehicle collisions in Maryland have between deer and continued to rise, with more than 22,900 deer-vehicle accidents reported during 2001. As deer and human populations have grown in the metropolitan areas, this danger has become greater. Although no statistics are available regarding the combined property damage and personal injury loss resulting from deer/vehicle collisions in Maryland, property damage alone is conservatively estimated to be in excess of \$6 million annually.

Avoiding Accidents

Most of these accidents occur between dusk and dawn. Watch for deer where roads pass through wooded or rural areas. The most important thing drivers can do to reduce the chances of an accident with a deer is to drive the speed limit. At night, reduce speeds below the limit, especially in rain, snow or fog. In addition to DNR recommendations, here are some other tips to keep in mind as a driver.

Deer usually travel in groups and generally maintain a home range of about one square mile. If you see a deer cross the road, slow down and use caution. Often additional deer are out of view and more are likely to follow.

A deer standing calmly in a field may suddenly jump into the road. Anticipate the potential for this rapid change in posture.

Elevate your deer awareness at locations with deer crossing signs. Deer crossing signs indicate areas where heavily used deer trails cross roadways. Slow down and watch for the eye-shine of deer near the roadway edges.

Be especially aware during the morning and afternoon. Deer tend to be more active during the early morning hours and late afternoon hour's year round. They are moving between evening feeding areas and daytime bedding sites.

Be especially cautious during seasons of high deer activity including - October to January during the breeding season, and May and June when yearlings are seeking new territories. In Spring, deer move as snow disappears and tend to gravitate near roadway shoulders for the first greening grass and remaining roadway salt.

Slow down to avoid hitting a deer, but do not swerve. This can cause you to lose control and strike another vehicle or to leave the highway and strike a tree or other object. Injuries to drivers and passengers increase when the vehicle swerves.



What do I do if a deer suddenly jumps in front of the car?

Of course, every case is different, but there are a few things to consider if you find yourself in this situation. The most important thing to remember is to maintain control of your car. Apply the brakes in a controlled manner. Deer are quick and agile animals. It is more likely that they will leap

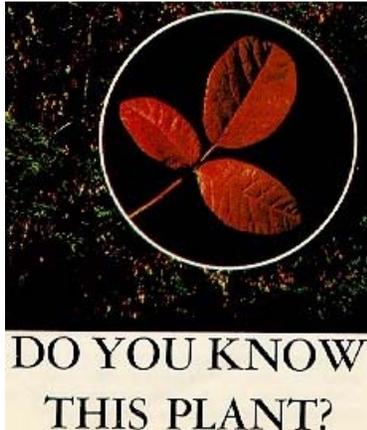
steer around them. Most serious injuries occur when a car is out of your path than that you will be able to brake and driver skids out of control and leaves the road or, worst of all, swerves into oncoming traffic. Obviously these circumstances arise quickly allowing very little time to react.

Try to think ahead. When you see a deer crossing sign, think about what you would do if you suddenly had a deer jump into the road. Mentally practice keeping a cool head and reacting in a controlled fashion. If it should happen one day you will be more likely to react appropriately

Technology Deterrence

According to traffic safety experts, some other ideas for using technology to try to reduce the number of vehicle-deer crashes include, but are not limited to the use of: Active Signs-installed roadside or on-board; Special Crossings-designed to funnel the deer traffic to a particular roadway crossing by fencing or other devices; Crossing Structures-overpasses and underpasses that take into account natural game trails; Deer-proof or electric fences-to help prevent deer from crossing roads at specified locations; Reflectors and Specialized Mirrors- placed along roadway shoulders at headlight level to freeze or frighten deer; Scent Barriers and Chemical Repellants-sprayed along roadway shoulders and released over time.

IDENTIFYING POISON OAK



Obviously, a big problem with getting Poison Oak is identifying the plant. If you can't spot Poison Oak a mile away, your only recourse is to *never touch any vegetation at all* while hiking or doing whatever you're doing.

You can recognize Poison Oak by its trademarked 3 leaf pattern. Unfortunately, there are other plants with triple leaf patterns too. You cannot depend on the color. In some areas, the leaves remain green the entire time they are on the stem. In other areas the leaves are red in the spring. Growth ranges from sea level to 5000 feet altitude in various forms, such as spindly plants, bushes, or climbing vines. Being a very common "shrub" in California, it must be watched for everywhere.

Poison Oak: An Evil Plant For All Seasons

Spring



Summer



Fall



Winter



Spring

In the Spring, the leaves are light, bright green with whitish green flowers clustered on the stems.

Summer

In the Summer, Poison Oak has yellow-green, pink, or reddish colors on some of the leaves, with small white or tan berries after the flowers of Spring.

Fall

During the Fall, the fruit becomes darker, the leaves turn bright red or russet brown.

Winter

In the Winter, the leaves and seeds fall, leaving stick or whip-like stems or climbing vines.

USR SAFETY TIP: DOCUMENT ALL SPOT INSPECTIONS!

REMEMBER: “IF YOU KEEP DOING WHAT YOU’RE DOING, YOU’LL KEEP GETTING WHAT YOU’RE GETTING.”

-COL CHARLES “WHIT” CAMPBELL