

What to do during a tire blowout

- The goal in any rapid loss of tire pressure or "blowout" is to keep the vehicle balanced and controllable. Do not panic. Any over-reaction by the driver -- including slamming on the brakes or abruptly removing your foot from the accelerator -- can result in a loss of vehicle control.
- In any blowout situation, it's most important to first remember the 2 things you should NOT do:
- **Do not step on the brake.** As instinctive as it may be, it's the worst mistake you can make in any tire blowout situation. Applying the brakes will cause an even greater imbalance on the vehicle's stability.
- **Do not abruptly release your foot from the accelerator.** This is the second worst mistake you can make. Rapidly releasing the accelerator causes the vehicle to transfer more of its weight from the rear tires to the front tires. With a flat tire, this can lead to loss of control of the vehicle.
- Instead, in any blowout situation, you should follow these 3 steps:
- **Gradually** release the accelerator .
- Correct the steering as necessary to stabilize your vehicle and regain control. Look where you want the vehicle to go and steer in that direction.
- Once your vehicle has stabilized, continue to slow down and pull off the road where and when you judge it's safe to do so.
- Remember, no matter which tire blows out -- front or back -- the do's and don'ts for safely maintaining control of your vehicle are exactly the same. The only difference between a front and rear tire blowout is that you will feel the force of a front blowout more in the vehicle's steering, while you'll feel a rear blowout more in the seat or body of the vehicle.

Source: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

What to do when you have a breakdown

- Move the vehicle to the right side of the road out of the flow of traffic, if possible. Stopping on the left side of a divided highway is extremely dangerous but sometimes unavoidable. Do not leave the vehicle stopped in a traffic lane.
- Move the vehicle as far away from the traveled portion of the roadway as you can. At the very least you should be far enough away that you can open the door without stepping out into traffic. You also want to be visible enough so that people can see you.
- Show clear signs that there is a problem and you need assistance by raising the vehicle hood. This is an internationally recognized sign of distress.
- In addition, turn on your emergency flashers and display any signs you have that indicate you need help (such as shade screens with distress messages).
- If you remain with the vehicle, another motorist will likely report your disabled vehicle to the police, and it will be easier for the police or others to provide assistance.
- Always exit the vehicle by the passenger side, unless you are on the left side of a divided highway.
- Do not allow passengers to remain in the vehicle.
- Stay off of the road and away from the vehicle and do not stand in front of or to the rear of the vehicle.
- Do not attempt to make repairs on a vehicle while it is in an area exposed to other traffic.

Be prepared for problem situations:

- Keep items in the vehicle such as flares, flashlights, blankets, and a first aid kit. Mobile phones in the vehicle also become valuable safety tools during breakdown situations. In addition, have water available in hot climates, especially for children.
- Know where items such as your spare tire, jack, and other tools are in the vehicle and how to use them. Check periodically to make sure they are in working order.

Be familiar with the operation of your vehicle:

- Read your owner's manual. A motorist who understands how his/her vehicle operates is better able to detect and address problems with the vehicle.
- Conduct periodic and regular maintenance of the vehicle.
- If you hear or sense that something is wrong with the vehicle, have it checked.

Sources: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and North Carolina Department of Transportation

What to do if your brakes fail

- Shift into a lower gear, release the clutch pedal (for manual transmissions) and apply the emergency brake.
- If your automobile has an automatic transmission, apply the emergency brake and move the gear lever into the low range position.
- Be Advised: This action can potentially cause damage to the emergency brake and to the transmission, but under the circumstances of brake failure, there is no better choice.

If your brakes become wet, you can dry them by:

- Drive the vehicle a short distance
- Apply light pressure to the brake pedal.
- The heat generated by the friction of the brakes against the brake drum will evaporate the water from the brake linings.
- To prevent excessive wear on brakes when moving down a long hill or steep grade, use a lower gear instead of the brake pedal to control speed. Shift to the lower gear at the top of the hill, before you descend.

Source: North Carolina Department of Transportation

How to deal with aggressive drivers

Common aggressive driving behaviors

- Running stop signs and red lights
- Speeding, tailgating, and weaving between lanes
- Passing on the right of a vehicle
- Making inappropriate hand and facial gestures
- Screaming, honking the horn, and flashing headlights

If you are confronted by an aggressive driver, or witness aggressive driving behavior, follow these guidelines:

- Make every attempt to safely move out of the aggressive driver's way.
- Do not challenge an aggressive driver by speeding up or attempting to "hold your own" in the travel lane.
- Always wear your seat belt -- not only will it hold you in your seat and behind the wheel in case you need to make an abrupt driving maneuver, but it will also protect you in a crash.
- Avoid eye contact with the aggressive driver.
- Ignore gestures, and refuse to return them.
- Report aggressive drivers to the appropriate authorities by providing a vehicle description, license number, location, and if possible, direction of travel.
- If you have a cellular phone, and can use it while driving safely, call the police. Many have special numbers such as 9-1-1.
- If an aggressive driver is involved in a crash farther down the road, stop at a safe distance from the crash scene, wait for the police to arrive, and report the driving behavior that you witnessed.

Source: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration