

November 2019

Drivers should prepare now for fall and winter travel challenges

Several factors help explain why traffic crashes tend to peak in Wisconsin over the next three months. Along with the potential for wintry weather, there are decreased hours of daylight, increased deer activity, combined with several major travel periods. The Village of Brooklyn Law of the Month for November highlights steps drivers should take to prepare themselves and their vehicles to safely navigate the fall and winter driving seasons.

A primary factor behind many crashes and slide-offs is drivers who are going too fast for conditions. To help ensure a safe trip, check the weather forecast and remove any frost, ice or snow from vehicle windows. Then, make sure everyone is buckled up, watch your speed, scan the road ahead carefully and allow adequate following distance.

Posted speed limits apply to ideal travel conditions. State law ([346.57](#)) requires drivers to operate at a speed that is "reasonable and prudent" to maintain safe control of their vehicle. State law ([346.88](#)) also requires drivers to keep all vehicle windows "reasonably clean at all times."

When roads become slippery:

- Slow down. Avoid sudden braking or steering. Don't use cruise control.
- Don't be overconfident if you have a four-wheel or all-wheel-drive vehicle. All vehicles require additional time and distance to stop in slippery conditions.
- Remember that bridge decks and overpasses tend to freeze up first.

Make sure that your vehicle is prepared for the challenges ahead:

- Ensure that vehicle tires are properly inflated, have adequate tread and that the battery and cooling system are in good condition.
- Put a snowbrush/scrapper in each vehicle, replace worn windshield wipers and have adequate washer fluid.
- Make sure that headlights and other vehicle lights are operating properly.
- Keep your fuel tank at least half-full to help prevent fuel lines from freezing and provide necessary fuel should you become stranded.

If your vehicle breaks down, or you slide off the road, it's generally safest to stay buckled up inside your vehicle until help arrives. Getting out of your vehicle and walking around a highway is always dangerous, but especially when roads are slippery.

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation's [website](#) provides more tips on safe winter driving, things to consider should you become stranded, keeping your vehicle properly maintained and how to prepare an emergency winter travel kit.

BROOKLYN POLICE DEPARTMENT

October 2019

Headlights help motorists see what's ahead - and allow other travelers to see you

Fall is a time of year when hours of daylight grow shorter and weather conditions like fog can create challenges for motorists. The Brooklyn Police Department's October Law of the Month covers laws and safety tips on proper vehicle lighting.

Keeping all lights on your vehicle clean and functioning properly allows drivers to see what's ahead and will help ensure that other travelers can see you. It's also a good idea to clean the outside and inside of your vehicle's windows to help enhance vision and reduce glare.

- State law requires drivers to use headlights during hours of darkness - defined as the period from one-half hour after sunset to one-half hour before sunrise - and all other times when there is insufficient natural light to clearly see a person or vehicle 500 feet away (equivalent to about one-and-a-half football fields). Driving with defective vehicle lights can result in a warning from law enforcement requiring vehicle owners to complete needed repairs within a specified time frame. State law ([347.06](#)) provides for a citation of \$163 and assessment of three demerit points for operating a motor vehicle without required lamps lighted.
- State law ([347.12](#)) requires drivers to dim their headlights whenever approaching or following within 500 feet of another vehicle.
- In 2016, state law was revised to require headlight use any time that weather conditions (such as fog, rain or snow) make it difficult to discern objects 500 feet away.

Many modern vehicles have an automatic headlight setting that functions well in most driving scenarios, but, when in doubt, it's a good idea to simply click on your vehicle's low beam headlights.

September 2019

The start of another school year means drivers must watch for students/buses.

As students across Wisconsin head back to school, motorists are being reminded to keep a sharp eye out for students, school buses and crossing guards. The village of Brooklyn's September Law of the Month details state laws designed to protect students as they head to and from school activities.

Children are easily distracted and don't always think about their own safety, requiring drivers to be extra alert and cautious. Motorists should be watchful for school buses loading and unloading passengers, and for children who are walking or biking.

SCHOOL BUS LAWS

Wisconsin law ([346.48](#)) requires drivers to stop at least 20 feet from a stopped school bus that has its red warning lights flashing. The law applies when approaching a school bus from either direction. The only exception is if you are traveling on the other side of a divided roadway separated by a median or other physical barrier.

When passed illegally, school bus drivers are authorized to report violations to law enforcement. A citation for failure to stop for a school bus costs **\$326 and four** demerit points.

All Wisconsin school buses built on or after January 1, 2005 must now be fitted with amber lights. When flashing, the amber lights mean drivers should slow down because the red flashing lights will soon be activated and the bus is about to stop. Drivers can carefully pass a school bus with amber lights activated, but should do so cautiously.

PEDESTRIAN LAWS

State law requires drivers to yield to pedestrians:

- Who have started crossing an intersection or crosswalk on a walk signal or on a green light if there is no walk signal;
- Who are crossing the road within a marked or unmarked crosswalk at an intersection where there are no traffic lights or control signals; and
- Whenever directed to stop by a school crossing guard ([346.46 \(2m\)](#)). Like bus drivers, crossing guards have the authority to report violations to law enforcement.

Depending on the specific violation, drivers who fail to yield the right of way to pedestrians that are legally crossing a roadway can receive a citation ranging from **\$175 to \$326**.

BICYCLING LAWS

When passing a bicyclist traveling in the same direction, motor vehicle operators must leave at least three feet of clearance and maintain this safety zone until safely past the bicycle. Violating state law that requires drivers to overtake and pass bicyclists safely can result in a **\$200** citation.

While motorists need to do their part, it's also important for parents to talk with their children about safe travel habits such as always using crosswalks and obeying bus drivers and crossing guards.

AUGUST 2019

Automobile drivers share the road with all types of travelers including motorcyclists, pedestrians, bicyclists - and a growing number of commercial motor vehicles (CMVs). The Brooklyn Police Department Law of the Month for August focuses on state traffic laws and good driving habits to help ensure safe interactions between CMVs and other motor vehicle operators.

Due to their size and weight, commercial motor vehicles have unique operating limitations such as large blind spots, longer stopping distances and limited maneuverability. Whether you're driving a CMV or other motor vehicle, the same rules and advice apply: don't tailgate, be aware of lingering in blind spots, pass safely and allow adequate room when you re-enter a traffic lane.

State law [346.07](#) pertains to safe passing, and prohibits drivers from returning to a traffic lane "until safely clear of the overtaken vehicle." Violations can result in a fine of \$232 and assessment of three demerit points. State law [346.14](#) prohibits drivers from following another vehicle "more closely than is reasonable and prudent." Violations can result in a \$200.50 citation and three demerit points. General safety guidelines that apply to CMV operators and other motorists:

- Be patient, watch your speed and don't tailgate. Some CMVs may travel slower than other traffic due to technology that limits their freeway speed. Drivers who follow too close decrease their ability to see what's ahead and have less time to react when traffic slows.
- When passing, don't linger in blind spots. As you return to a traffic lane, allow adequate room to avoid "cutting off" other vehicles.
- Use and watch for turn signals. CMVs require extra room to turn. Never try to squeeze in between the curb and a turning CMV.

Safety on our roadways requires all drivers to do their part by being patient, sharing the road and abiding by traffic laws.

BROOKLYN POLICE DEPARTMENT

JUNE 2019

The Brooklyn Police Department is asking motorcyclists and all other motorists to share the road, be alert, and be safe.

Motorcycle crashes often occur when a car or truck driver changes lanes, turns left, or pulls out in front of a motorcycle. Because of their smaller profile, it's easy to misjudge a motorcycle's speed and distance. That is why we're reminding motorists to always look twice at approaching motorcycles.

Failure to yield the right of way to another vehicle ([state law 346.18](#)) can result in a citation, but penalties are much more severe if the violation results in someone getting injured or killed. In 2018 in Wisconsin, there were 2,074 motorcycle crashes, 1,678 motorcyclists injured and 81 motorcycle fatalities.

Motorcyclists can do their part by getting properly licensed, wearing visible and protective equipment, and carefully scanning ahead for potential hazards such as gravel, debris or wildlife in the roadway. As a group, motorcyclists are aging. The average age of a motorcyclist involved in a fatal crash in 1992 was 30 - in 2018 it was 46.

Motorcyclists have two options to get the required Class M license: pass a motorcycle driving skills test after making an appointment at a Division of Motor Vehicles service center or successfully complete a WisDOT-approved rider education course. Motorcyclists who successfully complete an approved safety course earn a skills test waiver used to obtain their Class M license.

Whether a person is brand new to motorcycling or a returning rider, a safety course is a wise investment. Safety along our roadways requires all motor vehicle operators to share the road, watch their speed, eliminate distractions, and be alert.

BROOKLYN POLICE DEPARTMENT