

RURAL ROAD CRASHES

THEY'RE PREVENTABLE!

Iowa Department
of Transportation

DRIVING RURAL ROADS IS DANGEROUS.

- ▶ Crashes on rural roads occur at more than twice the rate of crashes on state roads.
- ▶ Driving too fast for conditions is the number one reason for rural road crashes.
- ▶ Driving or riding in a motor vehicle is THE MOST dangerous activity for a teenager. Motor vehicle crashes are the cause of more than 40 percent of all the deaths of Iowa teens.

HOW CAN YOU PREVENT CRASHING AND BEING INJURED OR KILLED ON RURAL ROADS?

- Slow down
- Pay close attention and don't get distracted
- Be patient behind slow-moving vehicles
- Use your seatbelt
- Be aware of changing road conditions ("They vary throughout the year or just around the next corner.")



RURAL ROAD CONDITIONS ARE LESS FORGIVING
ALTHOUGH THEY USUALLY HAVE LESS TRAFFIC TO
WATCH FOR, RURAL ROADS HAVE MANY
CHALLENGING CONDITIONS.

RURAL ROAD CHARACTERISTICS

Little or no shoulder
Narrow lanes
Soft shoulders
Steep hills
Fewer traffic signs
Narrow bridges
Sharp curves
Less maintenance
Rough road surface
Changes in road surface
Poor drainage
Crowned road surface
Limited sight distance
Blind driveways
Intersections without
stop signs
Potholes
No street lights
Faded or hidden signs

GRAVEL ROAD CHARACTERISTICS

Loose gravel
Washboarding
No center line
No edge markings
Unmarked curves
Seasonal roadbed changes
Limited snow removal
Few signs
Obscured road edges
Soft road edges
Dust – reduced visibility
Varied gravel depth
No marked passing zones
Mud and standing water



RURAL ROADSIDE HAZARDS

Deep ditches
Trees and bushes
Utility poles
No guard rails
Closer fences
Culverts and driveways
Mailboxes and signs
Adjacent ponds/water
Tall crops and weeds
T-intersections/dead ends

SHARING THE ROAD

Slow-moving farm vehicles
Oversize vehicles
Livestock, deer, pets
Vehicles using field driveways
Large trucks (especially during planting/harvest)
Working ATVs
Rural mail carriers
Horses and buggies
School buses
Pedestrians and bicyclists
Railroad crossings without gates or lights



RURAL ROAD DRIVING TIPS

- ▶ Adjust your speed to roadway conditions.
- ▶ Slow down to maintain control and avoid missing a curve or dropping off on a soft shoulder.
- ▶ Remember that when you drive twice as fast, it will take you three times as far to stop.
- ▶ Slow down when driving on gravel, since it will take you much longer to stop than it would on a paved road, and it's much easier to skid when turning.
- ▶ Be aware that loose gravel will build up on the sides of rural roads. If a front tire enters the loose gravel, steering control may be at risk. The gravel can pull you off the road if your speed is too fast for conditions.
- ▶ Once your vehicle leaves the road, it may roll, strike an object or embankment, or become submerged in a water-filled ditch.
- ▶ Adjust your following distance on rural roads:
 - 2 seconds is normal on state roads
 - 3 seconds or more for rural paved roads
 - 6 seconds or more on gravel or when surface conditions are wet or slippery
- ▶ If you can't see another vehicle in front of you because of dust, put more space between you and the other vehicle and allow for unexpected changes in their speed or direction.
- ▶ At narrow bridge signs slow down and be prepared to stop for oncoming traffic.



MORE RURAL ROAD DRIVING TIPS

- ▶ Expect to see bicyclists or pedestrians sharing narrow roads and shoulders.
- ▶ Share the road with approaching vehicles. Slow down and move over using caution for loose gravel.
- ▶ Before reaching the crest of a hill or before entering a curve, slow down, move to the right side of the road and watch for oncoming vehicles.
- ▶ Slow down and be ready to stop when you meet or come up behind a slow-moving vehicle.
- ▶ Slow-moving vehicles may be traveling at 35 MPH or less and take up more than half of the road. Adjust to the speed they're traveling and how much of the road they occupy.
- ▶ It is always illegal to pass a vehicle in a no-passing zone, no matter how slowly it's moving.
- ▶ Make sure the driver of the slow-moving vehicle can see your vehicle before passing. Always use extreme caution when passing.
- ▶ Watch for round, yellow-and-black railroad crossing signs. Rural crossings are often marked with only a black-and-white X-shaped crossbuck sign.
- ▶ Slow down before railroad crossings without any gates or signals, so you are prepared to stop for a train.



**FOR ELECTRONIC FILES, VIDEOS OR HIGHWAY SAFETY
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IOWA DOT DRIVER'S MANUAL

www.iowadot.gov/mvd/ods/dlmanual/dlmanual.pdf

IOWA DOT "YOU'RE THE COACH"

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IOWA COMPREHENSIVE HIGHWAY SAFETY PLAN

www.iowadot.gov/traffic/chsp/index.htm



We can reduce deaths, injuries and other losses on Iowa's rural roads.

RURAL ROAD CRASHES — THEY'RE PREVENTABLE!

These educational materials raise awareness of rural road crash risks, provide driving tips and stimulate discussion.

This 10-minute video contains valuable information for drivers of all ages. It can be useful in driver education training, company or community presentations, or for anyone who wants to improve their driving skills on rural roads.

These materials were produced in collaboration and may not represent the opinions or policies of each participating entity.



**Iowa Department
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IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY
Institute for Transportation



GREAT
PLAINS
CENTER FOR
AGRICULTURAL
HEALTH



**I-CASH | Iowa's Center for
Agricultural Safety and Health**

itsa
Iowa Traffic Safety Alliance

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