

Top 10 Safe Driving Tips for July 4th Weekend

Save lives. End distracted driving while encouraging defensive driving habits.

The first week of July is typically one of the busiest American travel periods of the year, as many people utilize the holiday for extended vacation trips. It is also one of the deadliest.

“Every traffic crash involves three elements – the driver, the roadway, and the vehicle,” says Central PA Auto Accident Attorney Jim Ronca. “Nationally and locally the vast majority of all traffic crashes involve some kind of driver error so drivers can greatly impact July 4th traffic safety by driving defensively.”

Fourth of July images inspire fireworks, parades, picnics and barbecues, red/white/and blue, concerts, and baseball games. What about safe driving? Last year, ten people died, 361 people were injured in 712 crashes investigated by the Pennsylvania State Police during the four day July 4th holiday weekend. Almost 8,000 people were cited for speeding and more than 300 people for DUI.

Don't ruin your weekend or your life or that of someone else's.

Here are 10 safe driving tips to follow for a safe 4th of July:

Before leaving, ensure that your vehicle is in good working order. Get a tune up; check tire tread and pressure, oil and fluid levels, working lights and windshield wipers, etc.

Buckle up for safety. In the majority of accidents, seat belts save lives. According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), seat belts reduce serious crash-related injuries and deaths by about 50%. Adults who live in rural areas are 10% less likely to wear seat belts (78% usage) than adults who live in urban and suburban areas (87% usage). Also, secure your infants and children in properly fitted car seats and booster seats.

Don't drink and drive. All 50 states and the District of Columbia have laws defining driving impaired as a crime with a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) at or above a specified level, currently 0.08 percent (0.08 g alcohol per 100 ml blood). According to the CDC, one 12-ounce beer has about the same amount of alcohol as one 5-ounce glass of wine, or 1.5-ounce shot of liquor. Drinking alcohol slows reaction time and impairs judgment and coordination, all skills needed to drive a car safely. The more alcohol consumed, the greater the impairment. If you drink, don't drive or make friends with a designated driver who does not imbibe. A 4-day weekend is not an automatic pass to drink and drive.

Observe speed limits. Allow plenty of time to get to your destination. Most likely you will have to share the road with thousands of other drivers, road construction, and possible rain and summer storms, so get used to it. You're not in a race. Speeders don't win.

Stay alert. Take a break when feeling drowsy. Take advantage of rest stops. Drive defensively.

Put the distractions away. Don't talk on your cell phone while driving. Worse, don't text while driving. Both require focus. You can only do one well. Program your GPS prior to leaving or while stopped, never while driving. Ask your passenger to change the CDs. Comb your hair and apply makeup upon arrival at your destination never while driving. Don't eat or open or close food packaging while driving. Other vehicles may be getting in your lane, turning, or slowing down. In-car distractions diminish your chances of driving defensively when you need to most. One or two seconds of distractions can negatively impact your life and the lives of others.

"Thousands and thousands die each year as a result of distracted driving on our nation's highway," urges Attorney Joel Feldman, father of a daughter who was killed by a distracted driver. "The death toll rises dramatically during summer months especially for young drivers. We can all make a difference if we just remember to keep our hands on the wheel, eyes on the road, and stop trying to multi-task while we drive. "

Load SUVs properly. When loaded down with additional weight -- such as passengers, luggage, and equipment -- SUVs become less stable. Compared to most sedans and station wagons, SUVs have a higher center of gravity. With the extra weight, which typically rides above a SUV's center of gravity, the vehicle can tip over more easily.

Drive cautiously on rural roads. According to the National Highway Transportation Safety Administration (NHTSA), more accidents occur on rural roads than other venues.

Secure your pet. Most likely you wear a seatbelt. What about your dog? Cats and dogs should be secured in crates that are secured by straps or bungee cords in the event of a sudden stop. A loose pet or a hurling crate can crash through the windshield. Protect your 4-legged friends.

Act like your life depends on driving defensively. It does.

About Attorney Jim Ronca: For more than 20 years, he has focused his practice on major car and truck accident cases, as well as pharmaceutical drugs and medical device cases, and construction site injury litigation. Jim co-authored the most widely used reference book on automobile personal injury insurance law. He was voted one of the Top 100 Lawyers in Pennsylvania and was awarded an AV Peer Review Rating by LexisNexis Martindale-Hubbell. He handles [auto accidents lawsuits in Central Pa.](#)

About Attorney Joel Feldman: His 21-year-old daughter Casey was in a pedestrian crosswalk when she was struck and killed in New Jersey by a distracted driver who reached for a beverage. The Casey Feldman Foundation sponsors [End Distracted Driving](#) whose mission is to preserve life and promote safety through advocacy, education, and action. It is the family's

hope to prevent other families and friends from suffering the loss of a loved one because of distracted driving.

About Anapol Schwartz, Personal Injury Law Firm: Both attorneys are shareholders for the Firm. With more than 25 lawyers, [Anapol Schwartz advocates](#) for people and families adversely affected by catastrophic motor vehicle accidents in order to obtain compensation for injuries, medical expenses, and wrongful death. Anapol Schwartz has offices in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, West Virginia, Arizona, and of counsel in Ohio.

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