

Loss Prevention

Please route to:

- Owner
- General manager
- Sales manager
- Service manager
- Office manager

Night driving

How many of us have trouble seeing at night?

Don't feel alone, this is true for most people. Why is night driving so dangerous? According to the National Safety Council, 90% of a driver's reaction time depends on vision, and your vision is severely limited at night. Depth perception, visual acuity, and peripheral vision are all compromised. Older drivers have even a greater difficulty seeing at night. A 50 year-old driver may need twice as much light as a 30 year-old. Older drivers also take longer to recover from glare. The reason that drivers have these difficulties is because different parts of the eye are used to see at night than during the day. According to the National Safety Council, more than one half of all traffic accidents occur at night, and traffic death rates are three times greater at night than during the day – even though there is much less traffic at night.

A low level of lighting makes objects more difficult to see. This means that the driver must be closer to hazards before he can see them. Consequently, if a driver is caught by surprise, he will react slower and is less capable of avoiding an accident. Headlights limit our visual range to the area ahead of us, which is only 250-350 feet of the road. The greatest danger in night driving is the area beyond the headlights. This is especially true on a road you've never driven before. Even if a driver is familiar with the road, he can't be certain in

anticipating the area beyond his headlights. Slowing down will allow more time to detect a hazard and avoid an accident. It's important to drive at a speed that allows stopping within the driver sight range.

Driving smart at night

Other drivers can see vehicles better at night when marker lights, tail lights, and brake lights are clean and working properly. Drivers also should be careful not to blind others with high beams. High beams must be dimmed when oncoming vehicles are within 500 feet. Do not use high beams to retaliate against drivers who refuse or forget to dim their high beams – that is a dangerous game to play. To avoid temporary blindness, the driver should look slightly to the right when oncoming vehicles have their "bright lights" on. In addition, drivers should switch their rearview mirrors to the night time setting after sunset.

The National Safety Council recommends these steps:

- Prepare your car for night driving. Keep headlights, tail lights, signal lights and windows (inside and out) clean.
- Properly aim headlights. Improperly aimed headlights blind other drivers and reduce the driver's ability to see the road.
- Don't drink and drive. Not only does alcohol severely impair driving ability, it also acts as a depressant. Just one drink can induce fatigue.

- Avoid smoking while driving. Smoke's nicotine and carbon monoxide hamper night vision.
- If there is any doubt, turn the headlights on. They'll make it easier for other drivers to see you. Being seen is as important as seeing.
- Reduce speed and increase following distances. It is more difficult to judge other vehicles' speeds and distances at night.
- The driver should be able to stop inside the illuminated area. If this is not the case, he is creating a blind crash area in front of his vehicle.
- When following another vehicle, keep headlights on low beams so the driver ahead is not blinded.
- If an oncoming vehicle doesn't lower beams from high to low, avoid glare by watching the right edge of the road and using it as a steering guide.
- Make frequent stops for light snacks and exercise. Stop and get rest when necessary.
- If the driver experiences car trouble, he should pull off the road as far as possible. Warn approaching traffic at once by setting up reflecting triangles near the vehicle and 300 feet behind it. Turn on flashers and the dome light. Stay off the roadway and get passengers away from the area.

Expect the unexpected

The best way to avoid an accident at night is to slow down and never drive beyond the headlights' illumination. Beware of wild animals on the road, especially deer. Road construction is being performed at night more frequently, and workers can be difficult to see. Reduced speed is especially important in construction zones, but always a good idea during evening hours.

If you have any questions or comments, contact your Zurich account executive or the Loss Prevention Department at 800-821-7803.

This Loss Prevention Bulletin is provided for informational purposes only. Please consult with qualified legal counsel to address your particular circumstances and needs. Zurich is not providing legal advice and assumes no liability concerning the information set forth above.