

- Never stare into the high beams of another car; guide your vehicle by watching the right edge of the road.
- Do not flick your high beams up and down to remind another driver to dim his bright lights. It can blind him temporarily.
- Never use high beams when going into a curve.
- Keep your windshield clean, inside and out.
- Keep your instrument panels dim.
- Keep your eyes moving; avoid focusing on any one object.
- Keep a bottle of windshield or glass cleaner in the cab for mirrors and interior windshields.
- Keep your windows clean. Wiping the blades with club soda or carbonated water will significantly reduce streaking.
- If the washing solution under your hood does not leave the glass clean after 10 wiper cycles, replace the blades and/or use a stronger concentration of washing fluid.
- Between 11 p.m. and 3 a.m., be particularly alert for drunk or drowsy drivers. If you notice another car with erratic speeds, weaving across lanes, or delayed starts at intersections, use extreme care in passing.

**Airbags:** Airbags are passive restraint devices hidden in the steering wheel or dashboard of many cars manufactured today. A passive restraint device is one that operates automatically. In contrast, a seat belt is an active restraint device and must be connected to operate. When activated, airbags expel a non-toxic nitrogen gas which fills a nylon bag. It inflates like a balloon to provide a cushion to passengers propelled forward by the force of an impact.

A common misconception is that one does not need to wear seat belts if there is an airbag. This is not true. Airbags should be used in conjunction with lap and shoulder belts. Children younger than 9 years of age should not be seated where there is an air bag. It can cause severe injury or death.



BILL BROWN  
Sheriff-Coroner

**SANTA BARBARA COUNTY  
SHERIFF'S OFFICE  
HEADQUARTERS**

P.O. Box 6427  
4434 Calle Real  
Santa Barbara, CA 93160-6427  
(805) 681-4100

**SBSO STATIONS**

Buellton (805) 686-8150  
Carpinteria (805) 568-3399  
Isla Vista (805) 681-4179  
Lompoc (805) 737-7737  
New Cuyama (661) 766-2310  
Santa Maria (805) 934-6150  
Solvang/Santa Ynez (805) 686-5000  
Marketplace-Goleta (805) 571-1540

**WEB-SITE:** [www.sbsheriff.org](http://www.sbsheriff.org)

**SANTA BARBARA COUNTY  
SHERIFF'S OFFICE**

BILL BROWN  
Sheriff-Coroner

**TRAFFIC SAFETY**



Do you want to be a better driver?

This brochure is full of tips that can help you be one.

Learn about the basic principles for effective driving, myths about seatbelts, tire blowouts, and much more.

# TRAFFIC SAFETY

## Driving Excellence

The following are the “Four P’s” or basic principles for effective driving:

- **Perception**—Perceive the complete picture of what is ahead by rotating your eyes 180 degrees, looking to the horizon, and scanning from side to side. That way you will see what is developing before it becomes a problem.
- **Planning**—Go through various driving situations in your mind and think through “escape route” options to prepare yourself beforehand for unexpected hazards.
- **Prevention**—Practice defensive driving and be ready to adjust to the other person’s mistakes. Give yourself time to react so that you can remove yourself from another driver’s folly.
- **Publicity**—Proper attitude is very important in safe driving. Many collisions are caused by bad decisions influenced by anger, speed, and frustration. When emotions run high, recognize and neutralize any tendency to forego safe driving practices.

## Myths About Seat Belts:

**“I don’t need a seat belt when driving at slow speeds or on short trips.”** All driving is dangerous. Fatalities have been recorded at 12 miles per hour on non-belted occupants. Most crashes occur at speeds less than 40 miles per hour. Of all crashes, 75 percent occur within 25 miles of home.

**“Seat belts are uncomfortable and too confining.”** Seat belts are designed to allow motion within the vehicle. They provide plenty of freedom without compromising safety. They are designed to activate immediately should a car come to a sudden halt.

**“If I wear a seat belt, I might get trapped in a burning car or underwater.”** Less than one out of 200 traffic-related incidents involve fire or water submersion. Even so, you’re much more likely to be knocked out and rendered unconscious if you’re not wear a seat belt. Your chances of escape are better while wearing a seat belt.

**“I might be saved if I’m thrown clear of a car in a collision.”** You are 25 times more likely to be killed in a crash when thrown from a vehicle. The force of an impact can throw you 150 feet which is 15 car lengths! Seat belts also prevent you from smashing your head into the windshield, which could cause spinal damage.

**“When I see a collision happening, I’ll brace myself.”** Crashes happen in the blink of an eye. It is impossible to prepare for crashes and the forces generated are enormous.

**“I don’t want to offend my passengers by telling them to buckle up.”** Most people willingly put on seat belts if someone reminds them.

**Tire Blowout:** Front tire blowouts are most dangerous because loss of a front tire dangerously interferes with the steering of the car. You may hear an explosion, and the vehicle will veer suddenly to the side of the blown-out tire. To regain control, follow these steps:

- Take your foot off the accelerator, giving the car a chance to slow down.
- Hold the steering wheel firmly with both hands—expect it to be difficult to steer.
- When you have gained control of the steering, put on the brake slowly; avoid locking the wheels. Come to a gradual and complete stop off the roadway to change the tire safely, if you can.

**Brake Failure:** In case of brake failure, do the following:

- Attempt to slow the vehicle, both manual and automatic models, by downshifting.
- Gently apply your parking brake. You cannot pump an emergency brake. Remember that this is a cable brake. The rear wheels may lock if you apply too much force and the vehicle will probably pull to one side.
- Pump the brake pedal rapidly. It may build up pressure in the brake lines and restore some braking force.
- If you have to collide with something, choose an impact-absorbing object, such as a clump of shrubs or a chain-link fence. Avoid head-on collisions; sideswipe whatever you hit.
- At slow speeds, simply turn off the engine and let the vehicle coast to a stop.

**Animals in the Road:** If you encounter an animal running into the road, do the following:

- Gauge your reaction by the size of the animal and your vehicle speed.
- Try to avoid the animal by slowing or swerving, but remember that it is better to hit a small animal (dog, cat, rabbit) than to risk losing control of the vehicle.
- Hitting a large animal (horse, deer, cow) will have an impact equal to hitting another vehicle. Remove your foot from the accelerator, steer the vehicle in the opposite direction from the one in which the animal is running, and be prepared for the animal to stop suddenly. Do not jam on the brake. Keep all steering wheel and brake motions smooth.
- Be alert for children who may run after the animal.

**Driving at Night:** While only about one-third of all traffic-related incidents occur at night, more than half of the fatalities stem from night-time driving. In fact, based on miles driven, there are two and a half times more fatalities at night than during the day. This is because less light is available and vision is restricted. Night vision varies considerably among people. Older people generally cannot see well in the dark, and eyestrain can substantially reduce night vision. Bright light, such as lightning or high-beam headlights, can cause temporary blindness at night.

Headlights on low beam illuminate the roadside for about 150 feet. On high beam, visibility will be 350 to 400 feet. At 55 miles per hour, it takes 4.5 seconds to cover 350 feet. For night driving, control speed so that your stopping range is within headlight range.

**To improve your visibility and the ability of others to see you, do the following:**

- Turn your headlights on at dusk, and leave them on until full daylight.
- Keep your headlights clean and properly aimed.
- Replace burned-out headlights immediately.
- Dim your high beams within 500 feet of an approaching vehicle or within 300 feet of a vehicle in front of you.