

Arming the transportation industry with safety solutions

Watch the Road

We have all faced this type of situation – unexpected obstacles in the middle of the travel lane that cause us to consider whether we need to swerve to avoid it or see if our vehicle will successfully pass over it. Debris can range from shredded tires to step ladders to bags of trash.

These obstacles and situations can contribute to collisions at any time or any place.

STATS:

- When cargo or a vehicle part dislodges from a moving vehicle and falls onto the road, it becomes a serious hazard for road users. Even a small item may be dangerous when it is discharged at highway speed prompting erratic avoidance maneuvers, and causing a crash...Vehicle related road debris has been linked to over 25,000 crashes per year, including as many as 90 fatalities. -- AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety (AAAFTS)
- "At highway speeds, even small debris can be deadly. Items such as hand tools, spare tires, tarps, and tie-down straps can pose a serious danger if they land on a congested highway." – AAAFTS

ROAD HAZARDS AND DEBRIS:

One of the most common causes of collisions on the roadway is due to debris. Debris shows up for many reasons – mostly unsecured or improperly secured loads that have fallen off of trucks or out of pickups, etc. Sometimes debris is dropped or thrown onto the highway by teens as a dangerous prank. Other times the debris is left from a previous crash and it has not been properly cleaned or removed.

Sadly, crashes related to obstacles in the travel lane are often serious since the driver often swerves to avoid the object and either rolls-over their vehicle or heads into oncoming traffic. Hitting and running over debris that is in the middle of the driving lane, or swerving to avoid "foreign objects" can seriously damage your vehicle, even if there is no resulting collision with another vehicle. Although most highways are monitored for debris on a daily basis, state troopers and highway maintenance crews can't be everywhere all the time. Additionally, improperly secured loads that fall in front of your vehicle can cause an immediate danger in at any time.

EYES ON THE ROAD:

Although it may sound simple, the best defense is to keep scanning the road in front of you for debris or other problems. Debris can appear at anytime, anywhere. People have spotted some really outrageous items in the

highway, but anything in your way could damage your tires and lead to a loss of control.

Some of the most common debris items encountered are

treads stripped from commercial truck tires, but many of the items associated with motor vehicles or hauling uncovered loads (tires, wood products, and organic material, such as yard debris, stumps, firewood, and pruned branches). Debris also occurs in the form of vehicle parts that fall or tear off. All vehicles are subject to having parts or equipment break loose. Such debris may be deposited on the road and run over or may bounce off the pavement and strike another vehicle. Blown tires, tire treads, drive shafts, bumpers, hoods, leaf springs, and brake parts have all contributed to serious crashes. Items improperly tied onto passenger vehicles, such as mattresses or furniture, also pose a threat to drivers since they can blow off of the roof and land anywhere. You should also pay attention to vehicles that are carrying loads that could fall onto the road – give them extra space or pass them if it is safe to do so. Loads of pipes, lumber, or scrap metal are just a few of the loads that can prove difficult to secure against shifting or flying out of the truck.

PLAN AHEAD:

Think about where you could move your vehicle in an instant if you really had to swerve to avoid an object in the roadway. Be extra careful to pay attention to any "blind areas" around your vehicle where another car or truck may be "lurking". If you swerve to avoid hitting some obstacle in the lane and end up hitting a vehicle in your blind area, you're still "in trouble". Additionally, other vehicles may swerve into your lane because of an obstacle in their own lane – usually, you can spot this by watching traffic ahead of your vehicle for odd, repeated swerving at the same point in the road. If you're diligent in watching the road ahead, you should be able to slow down to better cope with the situation.

SUMMARY:

Take care while driving, road debris can become an issue with no notice and it can have terrible consequences. Additionally, it's the responsibility of various local and state repair crews to monitor roads for debris to reduce the potential for collisions. If you see a problem, report it.



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The Shield
Watch the Road
Quiz



Driver Name: _____ Date: _____
Please Print

Driver Signature: _____

Please circle one correct answer for each question.

1. One of the most common causes of collisions on the roadway is due to _____.
 - a. debris
 - b. falling stars
 - c. marshmallows
 - d. None of the above
2. Some of the most common debris items encountered are?
 - a. treads stripped from commercial truck tires
 - b. tires
 - c. stumps, firewood, and pruned branches
 - d. All of the above
3. The biggest cause of debris falling from a vehicle is failure to _____.
 - a. keep eyes on the road
 - b. secure the load
 - c. control speed of the vehicle
 - d. all of the above
4. You should be extra careful to pay attention to any _____ around your vehicle where another car or truck may be "lurking".
 - a. rocks
 - b. blind spots
 - c. water
 - d. both a and c
5. Take care while driving, road debris can become an issue with no notice and it can have terrible consequences.
 - a. true
 - b. false

