

## Top 10 safety tips for holiday road travel this season

Midas, a leading automotive parts and travel accessories store, shares some insights into what local motorists should be looking out for when going out on the road this holiday season.



Don't let this happen to you. (Image: Wikimedia Commons)

The World Health Organisation (WHO) regards South Africa as one of the world's worst countries for road safety, with roughly 1,280 fatalities occurring between December 2012 and January of this year. 40% of those deaths are as a consequence of drunken pedestrians walking on our roads, with other catalysts being excessive road speeding, dangerous overtaking, and no seatbelt wearing or as a result of vehicles that are not roadworthy.



The better equipped you are, the safer you are likely to be.

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So, it comes as little surprise that holiday road users should be taking extra precautions this season, by reminding themselves of the basics when planning a road trip. Midas recommends some easy-to-remember tips when travelling this season;

### 1. Plan ahead

Plan your holiday route before leaving home, giving yourself enough time on the road to reach your destination without speeding. Use a GPS tool to guide you, making your trip stress-free by planning where to refuel, rest stops and trying to avoid driving after dark.

### 2. Have your vehicle serviced

To avoid the inconvenience and expense of a mechanical breakdown, especially on a long trip, have your vehicle checked and serviced by a reputable motor mechanic or car dealership. An option to consider is visiting your nearest Auto Care & Diagnostics (ACD) Workshop, a national network of independently owned workshops specialising in vehicle service, maintenance and repairs, while providing the latest in automotive diagnostics solutions. Visit [www.acdworkshop.co.za](http://www.acdworkshop.co.za) to locate the one closest to you.

### 3. Install child safety seats

Research has shown that hospitalisation time for children from birth to four years who are involved in road accidents is reduced by up to seventy percent if they are seated in a booster child safety seat. They are specifically designed to securely hold a child in place, preventing them from being thrown into the dashboard, windscreen, or other parts of the vehicle in the event of a motor vehicle accident.

#### **4. Buckle-up**

Safety belts are 99% effective in preventing occupants from being ejected from the vehicle in a crash. Passengers who are seated at the back of a vehicle and are not wearing a seatbelt can inflict serious harm on those seated in front, as the sheer impact and sudden force can catapult passengers within a split second. The same applies to a driver and passenger sitting in front. Always wear a seatbelt to prevent being thrown through the windscreen or being smashed into the dashboard.

#### **5. Don't talk on your cellphone while driving**

Even though you may be using a hands-free device, try to avoid taking or making calls while driving. Being distracted from the road can prevent you from making quick, life-saving choices to avoid a hazard or potential accident.

#### **6. Keep your distance**

Give yourself room to react to an obstruction in the road by following the two-second rule. Pick a fixed object like a sign or tree on the road ahead and when the vehicle in front of you passes it, start counting one one-thousand, two one-thousand ... If you reach the object before you count to two, you are following too close. You will need that distance to avoid hazards on the road.

#### **7. Back to basics - obey speed limits and always signal**

Allow extra time to travel without the need to speed or hurry, and always demonstrate your intentions by signalling, to give others a heads-up when you are changing direction. Turn on your signals at least five to eight seconds before your turn, giving other motorists, pedestrians and cyclists adequate time to respond [At the time of posting this article, Afrikaans singer Steve Hofmeyr was arrested in Bronkhorstspuit for travelling at 169km/h in a 80km/h zone, and Julius Malema was arrested for speeding at 215km/h. Brilliant role models, both... Not! - Editor]

#### **8. Scan your environment**

Continually be aware of upcoming intersections or decision points. Being able to spot a traffic sign early allows one to make the appropriate choices to prevent disasters.

#### **9. Watch out for fatigue on a long trip**

Turning up the radio, rolling down the car window, or having trouble keeping your eyes open and focused on the road may be signs that you are struggling with fatigue. Pull over and take a 15-20 minute nap. On a long trip, stop every two hours for a break. Ensure that you have at least eight hours' sleep the night before undertaking a long trip, to feel energised and alert when driving.

#### **10. Don't use cruise control when the roads are wet**

Wet roads become more dangerous and challenging to navigate, especially when oil residues on roads, smooth road surfaces, or smooth tyres are thrown into the equation. So the last thing a motorist needs is constant power when trying to navigate a slightly more challenging road.

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