

## How To Avoid and Prevent a Rear-End Collision



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A rear-end collision occurs when one automobile suddenly slows or stops, causing the next vehicle to crash into it from behind. A rear-end collision may also occur when an inattentive driver crashes into the car in front. 32% of PCOC program auto loss frequency and severity is due to vehicles rear-ending others. You can avoid a rear-end collision by following a few simple tips:

- 1.** Look farther up the road to spot traffic stopping long before the vehicle in front of you slams on its brakes. This will give you the time to brake sooner and gentler, which will force the vehicles behind you to brake sooner, minimizing drivers behind you panic-braking and possibly plowing into you.
- 2.** Check your mirrors more often. Drivers should be checking their mirrors every five to eight seconds and then again when slowing or stopping. When coming to a stop at a traffic light or stop sign, always look in the rear-view mirror to be sure vehicles behind you are also stopping. When traffic begins to slow or stop on the highway, always check your mirrors to be sure traffic is stopping behind you.

- 3.** Stay focused on your driving. There may not have been any vehicles behind you when you initially stopped, but they could be rushing up behind you as you sit and wait. It is not inconceivable that one of those drivers has been distracted by a cellphone.
- 4.** As you slow to a stop, identify an escape route. Think of the shoulder, sidewalk, curb lane, left turn lane or any other safe route where you can get out of the way of a charging vehicle.
- 5.** Never rush up to a stop sign or red light. Always slow gradually and this will force the vehicle behind you to also slow more gradually. If you rush up to a red light and then brake hard, the driver behind you may not react too swiftly. The advantage is the light may change to green before you get to it and you may not have to brake at all. This has the secondary benefit of saving you fuel and brake wear.
- 6.** When you stop, leave two or three vehicle lengths between you and the vehicle in front of you. If you pull up tight behind the vehicle in front, you have locked yourself into a potential danger zone, eliminating any options of escape. Giving yourself room will give that onrushing vehicle a little more braking space.
- 7.** While stopped, visualize what you can do should the vehicle behind you not show signs of stopping in time. Go over in your mind that you need to get off the brake and steer where you want to go. Most drivers will simply push on their brake harder when being struck from behind in an instinctual reaction to a crash. It is unfortunately the wrong response. Be prepared to accelerate and steer to where you want to go.
- 8.** Check your brake lights frequently. A simple 25-cent fuse can blow and leave your car without any brake lights. Drivers rely on that signal to warn them you are stopping. Any burned out bulb should be replaced promptly. You can use the reflection in a store front window to check your own brake lights.
- 9.** Leave more space between you and the vehicle in front. Following too closely not only increases your chance of hitting the vehicle in front but also guarantees you will be braking harder when that vehicle's brakes are applied. This will cause the trailing vehicle to also brake rapidly, increasing the chance of a collision.
- 10.** If drivers follow too closely, do not brake hard in order to scare them off. This can easily end up resulting in a rear-end collision. Simply slow gradually at the next available passing zone and they will eventually pass you. If they still insist on following too closely, then pull into a service station or any other safe location and let them go by.

**Sources:**

- California DMV

**Questions or Assistance:**

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