

If You Encounter Trouble On The Road

Last year in Tennessee there were more than 181,000 motor vehicle crashes statewide. According to the National Safety Council, one in eight drivers will be involved in a crash this year. If that one person is you, do you know what to do?

The Tennessee Highway Patrol responds to more than 500,000 calls for service each year. We'll be there to help you too should you need us – whether it's an accident or a flat tire. But, since these types of problems can cause anxiety, we've listed some tips on what you can do if you find yourself in a similar situation.

1. Call *THP (*847)

Should you need the assistance of a Trooper while traveling anywhere in Tennessee, simply dial *THP (*847) from your cell phone. You will be automatically connected to the closest THP dispatch office and the operator will send a Trooper to your location. The Tennessee Highway Patrol is on duty 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year and we're ready to help you.



Calling 911 is still an option and can be used if you find yourself in an emergency situation.

However, dialing *THP may cut down on wait time as the call goes directly to the Troopers where you're located.

That's why it's important to be aware of your surroundings when you're traveling. Pay attention to mile markers, road signs and landmarks along the road. Should you encounter problems, knowing your location will make it much easier for a Trooper to find you and provide assistance.

2. Steer Your Vehicle Off the Traveled Roadway

No matter your particular problem, move your vehicle as far away from the flow of traffic as possible. Carefully maneuver the vehicle to the right shoulder of the road. If the traffic is too heavy and it will cause more danger to you and others around you, move the vehicle to the emergency lane, median or other place off the roadway. Do not stop on a bridge or next to a guardrail if at all possible.

Turn your wheels to the right when pulling off to the shoulder of the road. If the car is struck by another vehicle, there is a better chance it will be pushed off the roadway and not into the path of traffic.

If you're involved in a crash and there are no serious injuries, you should move the vehicle out of traffic. Not only is it safer to move your vehicle from the main roadway before an officer arrives, but it is also legal. Tennessee law protects a driver or any other licensed person who moves the vehicle out of the main flow of traffic from being considered liable or at fault because of such action. (T.C.A 55-10-117)

3. Maneuvering Off the Roadway

A flat or blowout in a highly trafficked area can cause great alarm. At the first sign of tire trouble, firmly grip the steering wheel, but do not slam on the brakes. Let the vehicle slow down gradually by taking your foot off the gas pedal. Carefully maneuver your vehicle to the shoulder or toward the nearest exit. If you must change lanes, make sure and use your signals and watch the traffic around you by using your mirrors and looking over your shoulder. Once you're safely off the road, continue to steer as your vehicle slows down. Lightly apply the brakes until you come to a complete stop. Turn on your emergency flashers.

If you know how to change the tire and have the right equipment, proceed cautiously. If you need assistance, simply dial *THP. Inform the dispatcher of your problem and location so a Trooper can be sent to assist!

4. Wait In A Safe Area

Once you've dialed *THP and are waiting for help to arrive, determine the safest place for you and any passengers to wait. That may mean remaining in your vehicle or walking to an area away from traffic. If you are well off the roadway and traffic is light, the best policy would be to remain in vehicle until help arrives.

However, if traffic is heavy, you may feel more comfortable several feet away from the roadway. If you choose to exit your vehicle, get out on the side furthest from the passing vehicles and find a spot where you feel secure. Don't stand next to, behind, or in front of your vehicle.

5. Signaling For Assistance

If you find yourself in trouble and don't have a cell phone, there are several actions you can take to let people know you need help. First, turn on your emergency flashers. This will alert passing motorists that you're there as well as you need assistance. Raising the hood of your car and/or placing something white on the antenna or out a window is also a signal that you need help.

6. Abandoning Your Vehicle

If you encounter an emergency that requires you to abandon your vehicle on the side of the road, try your best to leave the vehicle in a location that does not impede traffic. Again, turning your wheels to the right is a good idea.

Tennessee law states you have 48 hours to remove a vehicle before it is towed. Abandoned vehicles may be legally removed from the roadway if left for more than 48 hours. However, if a vehicle is left in a place that interferes or impedes traffic, that vehicle can be towed immediately. If towed by THP, the vehicle will be taken to a local towing lot. You can contact the THP District Headquarters in the area where you left your car to find out where the vehicle was towed.

7. Exchange Information With Other Parties

If you have a crash where another vehicle is involved, it's important that you obtain all the contact information for the other driver that you can at the time of incident. The crash report provided by the law enforcement agency investigating the incident does not contain all the information you need for insurance filing purposes.

Ask the other driver for their name, phone number, address, and driver license number. Record the make and model of the vehicle. If the driver is not the vehicle owner, ask for the owner's name too. You should also obtain the name of the driver's insurance company, agent, phone number and policy number if known.

If witnesses stop, get their information also as well as a contact number for the Trooper or officer who investigates the crash. It's best that you save discussions about the crash for the law enforcement officers on the scene.

8. Dealing With Road Rage

If you're a victim of road rage or any other form of aggressive driving, report it by dialing *THP. Never retaliate or react in a manner that causes more danger. Slow down and let the other driver pass. When it's safe to use your cell phone, call *THP and provide them with your location, a description of the vehicle and details regarding the aggressive driving behavior.

9. Move Over For Others

In Tennessee it's the law to move over for emergency vehicles such as police, fire, rescue, and highway maintenance personnel. This principle should also be applied to fellow motorists along the side of the road. Should you pass a stranded motorist, follow the move over law by moving into the adjacent lane away from the vehicle if it's clear. If there is too much traffic, simply slow down. Next, if it's safe to do so, dial *THP to alert dispatchers of the problem you saw. That person may not have a cell phone and need the assistance of the Highway Patrol.

10. Prepare In Advance

Before you hit the road, prepare for emergency situations. Take a cell phone and charger with you so you can easily call *THP for help. Keep an emergency safety kit in your vehicle. Assembled kits are available for purchase at many retail outlets, or you can create your own. THP recommends having a flashlight, reflectors, jumper cables, first aid kit and an empty gas can. It's also a good idea to have a pair of gloves for tire changes and a poncho and blanket for inclement weather.