

# Seven Tips for a Safe Summer Road Trip

**R**OAD TRIPS are part of the American lifestyle, but when it's time to hit the road, you should be prepared.

The National Highway Traffic and Safety Administration (NHTSA) offers the following tips to make your next family road trip safe and enjoyable, and with minimal risk.

## Service your vehicle

Before hitting the road for a long stretch, you need to make sure that your car is in good working order and has had its latest regular service and tune-up. Take your car to the shop and have them check your tires, battery, belts, fluids and air conditioner.

## Get a good night's sleep before you leave

Driving while drowsy can reduce your reaction time and judgment as if you were impaired by alcohol. Drive only when well rested, and if another licensed driver is in the car, it's a good idea to switch every few hours.

## Emergency preparedness

The NHTSA recommends packing an emergency kit that includes:

- Water
- Warm blankets
- A flashlight
- Jumper cables
- Flares
- Tools to change a tire
- A first aid kit
- A fully charged cellphone

You may also want to consider buying a roadside assistance plan that will cover the costs of a tow and assistance if your vehicle breaks down.

## Pack heavy items low

Store heavy items low in the seat wells so they won't become projectiles during a sudden stop.

And if you have an SUV with an open cargo area in the back, make sure that you strap or batten down heavy items like suitcases or strollers.

## Take frequent breaks

Try to avoid driving more than two hours straight without a break. Also drink lots of fluids, which will force you to make bathroom stops and stretch your legs.

## No Mr. Magoo driving

Make sure that you are looking far enough down the road to survey what's ahead and so that you can see any oncoming dangers. In dense traffic, you need to look at least 10 cars ahead, the NHTSA recommends. In faster-flowing traffic, reduce that length to five.

## Don't touch the phone

If you're on vacation, no phone calls should be so important that you have to pick them up right away – and certainly not when you are behind the wheel.

And it's been proven that even talking using a hands-free device is distracting.

Talking on the phone and driving at the same time is like talking on the phone and watching TV. You won't be as focused on the task at hand and may not see a danger that could imperil you and your family. ❖

