

## Early Morning and Night Driving

Darkness makes driving a more challenging job. Many energy dealer drivers dislike early morning and night driving for a simple reason — they can't see as far or as well as during daylight. Besides being more challenging, collisions and fatal accidents increase sharply during dark hours. Unfortunately it's the nature of your energy dealer business that requires your drivers to operate in darkness. There are some safety procedures listed below that drivers may implement to help with the challenge and control the risks of driving in darkness.

- One study indicates that one-third to one-half of all vehicles have poorly aimed headlights which reduces their effectiveness and sometimes blinds approaching drivers. Pre-trip inspections should ensure that headlights and tail and signal lights are working at maximum effectiveness. In addition, windshields, side windows and mirrors should be clean and unobstructed.
- About 90% of driver's reaction is dependent on vision. When exiting a lighted building, it takes a few minutes for eyes to adjust to darkness. Waiting for the eyes to adjust before driving off into the darkness could pay off in safety. According to the British Association of Optical Practitioners, waiting a couple of minutes before driving in the dark will improve vision 20 or more times.
- It's wise to wear sunglasses if you spend the day in bright sunshine, especially if there is snow on the ground. Sunglasses will help preserve the eye's supply of "visual purple," a retinal chemical that helps them adapt to darkness.
- Reduce or eliminate smoking while driving at night. In addition to the obvious distraction, nicotine and carbon monoxide, two ingredients of the smoke, can reduce a driver's ability to see and vision is especially important in darkness.
- The ability to recover from glare decreases with age and this compounds the problems of adapting to night driving. Studies show that the average 60-year-old needs 7 times more light than the average 20-year-old to perform the same task.
- If you are wondering if it's dark enough to turn on your headlights, then it's a good idea to turn them on. They may not help you see any better, but it's much easier for other drivers to see you and that lessens the chance of a collision.
- Since drivers can't see as well in the darkness, they won't have as much time to react appropriately, therefore, speed should be reduced and following distance should be increased.

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- According to studies, overdriving headlights is the most persistent problem of night driving. Concentrating on the brightly lit pavement is a trap. Develop the habit of looking beyond the area illuminated by the headlights. Look into the darkness for signs of activity and danger such as reflections from power lines along the roadway, from bridge abutments and from animal's eyes. Look for light glows in vehicle exhaust and in fog. Each of these indirect light sources may signal activity ahead.
- Fatigue is a significant issue. It lowers the level of alertness, especially between 2 and 7 a.m. In addition to the hours of service, vibration, noise, inactivity and body position each contribute to fatigue. Staying alert may require one or more of the following — sleep, exercise, fresh air, deep breathing to increase oxygen intake, conversation or regular meals.



Utica Mutual Insurance Company and its affiliated companies, New Hartford, NY 13413  
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