

Driving Safely **Fact Sheet**

DRIVING SAFELY

Driving can be dangerous to your health! With all of the activities, responsibilities, and stresses of life, it's easy to forget just how important it is to use good safety practices when driving. Automobile accidents disproportionately affect American Indian/Alaska Natives (AI/ANs), particularly AI/AN children who face dramatically higher rates of injury and death in collisions. Most of these collisions are preventable. According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), more than 40% of auto crashes among AI/ANs involve alcohol and 56% of fatalities were people not wearing a seatbelt. (1)(2)(3) Below are some ideas for driving safely, especially in Indian Country.

SOME SIMPLE SOLUTIONS:

- 1. Always wear a seatbelt.** As Elders, we may be accustomed to older cars that did not have seatbelts or may find seatbelts to be uncomfortable. However, wearing them can prevent serious injury or death. Even in cars with airbags, seatbelts are still needed. (1)(2)(3)
- 2. Make sure children and grandchildren have the proper child seat.** It is the responsibility of Elders to protect those who cannot protect themselves. Using the proper child seats can save a child's life in a crash. (1)(2)(3)
- 3. Follow the speed limit and drive defensively.** Avoid distractions like talking on a cell phone, applying make-up, and eating. Keep your distance and steer clear of other aggressive or fast drivers. (4)
- 4. Model good safety behavior to help teach the next generation safe habits.**



IT'S WHERE WE DRIVE

Using good safety habits is doubly important in Indian Country, as roads in rural areas can be unsafe. We all know of the local roads with reputations for danger and collisions and we also know that these roads are often not regularly maintained. Staying aware of conditions on the road and driving cautiously is the best defense, especially in rural areas, which are among the most dangerous places to drive. (5)(6)

IT'S WHAT WE DRIVE

Practicing good safety habits and staying aware of road conditions are very important to preventing collisions, injuries, and death on the road. Maintaining the cars we drive is important too.

- Keep windows clean (inside and outside) to prevent glare. (7)
- Keep head and tail lights clean, and regularly check for burnt-out bulbs. (7)
- Check tire pressure regularly and replace tires when they no longer have enough tread. You can test this by sliding a penny in between the treads of the tire. If you can see the top of Lincoln's head, there is not enough tread left. Also, replace tires if cracks or bulges appear in the sidewalls. (8)(9)
- Replace worn-out windshield wipers when they start to smear, clean off the windshield and always keep the washer fluid filled.

AND YES, IT'S OUR AGE

As we age our driving abilities will diminish. Reduced flexibility, strength and joint pain make it more difficult to maneuver quickly in an emergency. Changes in vision and hearing make it more difficult to see and hear properly what is around us. (7)

There may come a time when you need to stop driving. It is important to know your limits, to be honest with yourself and others about them, to listen to the concerns of others about your driving, and to reflect on how these limits and concerns may impact your driving ability. (7) **By remaining vigilant behind the wheel, you can help to ensure that you and those you love arrive safely.**



SOURCES

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