



MaineDOT Flash Facts

Topic: Improper passing

Some Maine Crash Facts:

- Improper passing caused about 2,300 crashes, 24 fatalities and 800 injuries from 2002 to 2004.
- Improper passing leads to these crash types:
 - Rear End - 1,452 crashes (2 fatalities, 388 injuries)
 - Intersection Movement - 434 crashes (1 fatality, 140 injuries)
 - Run Off Road - 201 crashes (4 fatalities, 127 injuries)
 - Head On - 119 crashes (16 fatalities, 102 injuries). A Head-On crash is the most severe consequence of making an *unsafe* pass.
- (Run Off Road and Head On top the list for fatalities.)

Passing the car or truck in front of you when it's going well under the speed limit may not seem like a big risk. But according to the MaineDOT, improper passing leads to hundreds of crashes and injuries each year.

Before you put yourself, your passengers, oncoming traffic and the vehicle being passed at risk, consider whether you are entering into a dangerous passing situation.

Passing is NOT safe when:

- There is a double yellow line.
- You do not have a clear line of sight.
- There is not enough clear distance to make the pass and return to your lane. Remember, if you and the oncoming car are both going 55 mph, the distance between you is closing at 110 mph. That's about 500 feet in three seconds.
- You are anywhere near an intersection or driveway.
- The person in front of you is driving erratically.
- There are dips in the road that can hide oncoming vehicles.

What happens when you're on a two lane road and behind a slow driver? For most people, the urge to tailgate is strong and you are immediately considering a pass. BUT, the MaineDOT reminds you to:

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Avoid the urge to tailgate. Maintain a safe distance. Tailgating can:

- Make the driver ahead anxious and distracted, which might even cause them to go more slowly or not pay attention to the road ahead.
- Limit your view of the road ahead.
- Lead to a rear end crash if the car ahead has to suddenly slow or stop.

Relax. On average, passing a slow driver *may* save a few minutes of your drive. With intersection stops and other traffic delays, you will likely arrive at the same time as the other driver! Consider the risks, and choose to enjoy the ride instead.

What happens when you pass unsafely? You can be in a serious crash.

The MaineDOT wants you to know that more than two-thirds of crashes due to improper passing result in striking the vehicle being passed. The other one third of improper passing crashes result in more serious Head-On or Run Off Road crashes.

Why do passing-related crashes occur?

- Drivers pull out and can't safely get back into their lane.
- Traffic slows unexpectedly.
- An unexpected vehicle enters the picture.

To make sure this doesn't happen to you, you should:

- **Maintain a safe distance.** This gives you much better visibility ahead so you can see oncoming vehicles and other traffic conditions.
- **Estimate if the pass is really worth it.** If there is a long line of cars, you're not going to accomplish anything by moving up one or two.
- **Use your rearview mirror, NOT your side mirror, to make sure the pass is complete before re-entering the lane.** This allows a reasonable gap between you and the vehicle being passed.
- **Watch for vehicles entering the oncoming lane from driveways,** who may not be looking to the right for a passing vehicle.

(Depending on weather)

- ✓ Passing becomes much more risky when roads are wet, snowy or icy. Road spray from other vehicles may limit your visibility. Avoid passes in these conditions.
- ✓ Be extra careful around a snow plow as your visibility may be reduced due to blowing snow. Resist the urge to pass a snow plow. Remember that the driving conditions ahead of a plow are worse than behind it.
- ✓ Remember that the other lane may not be ice- or snow-free.

Passing is risky. **Be a Road Model** and make sure your decision to pass is a safe one for everyone and always wear your seat belts.

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