

Summer Survival Guide for Professional Drivers

Professional drivers, get ready to share the road.

Nearly 85% of Americans expect to travel this summer, according to a 2023 travel survey from [The Vacationer](#). And 100 million people plan to take a road trip of 250 miles or more.

Not only will this create crowded highways, but it will also increase the risk of motor vehicle crashes. Out-of-town drivers and lost motorists bring unique challenges, including erratic behavior and distracted driving. An increase in bicycle traffic and the presence of highway work zones bring even more hazards.

That's why professional drivers must use their best defensive driving behaviors daily. Below are six tips to help you survive the summertime rush:

- 1. Plan to be patient.** A pre-trip plan will help you avoid the anxiety of feeling rushed — and the bad driving behaviors (such as speeding) that come with it. Plan your route. Consider the time of day and traffic volume. Add extra time to your trip to prepare you for the unexpected, such as pop-up thunderstorms or unscheduled lane closures. Never drive faster than the posted speed limit on any road. Practice extra patience in work zones.
- 2. Stay alert. Drive defensively.** Tourists won't know the roads as well as you do, and if they're lost, they may make sudden stops and turns. Watch for out-of-state license plates. Proceed with caution at intersections and on on-ramps and off-ramps. Merge with traffic safely.
- 3. Know the signs of distracted driving.** Smartphones aren't the only reason other motorists might erratically drive this summer. They may also get distracted by young children who are passengers. Or they may be looking at their vehicle's navigation system to find a faster route. Or they may take their eyes off the road to see a popular attraction. Protect yourself by knowing the signs of distracted driving — weaving in and out of lanes, not using signals, failing to keep a steady speed — and keep a safe distance.



- 4. Scan for cyclists.** Bicycles follow the same road rules as motor vehicles. Yield to them at stop signs, stoplights and intersections. Give bicycles at least three feet of clearance before passing. Look twice for cyclists when entering and exiting your truck.
- 5. Watch the weather.** Summertime thunderstorms can create dangerous lightning, wicked winds and drenching rain. Check the forecast before you start your route. Wait out the storm if your visibility decreases. Drive well under the speed limit on wet roads. Never drive through standing water.
- 6. Check your truck.** Conduct thorough pre- and post-trip inspections. The risk for a tire blowout increases in hot summer weather, so always check your tire pressure with a gauge (not a "thump test.")