

# RURAL DRIVING SAFETY

You may be surprised to know the most dangerous place to drive is not on high-speed interstates or congested city streets – it's on rural roadways. Each year nearly 70 percent of Ohio's crash fatalities occur in rural areas, accounting for more alcohol-related, motorcycle and commercial-involved fatal crashes than in urban areas. Drivers often have the false perception that back roads are safer due to lighter traffic and less enforcement in rural areas.

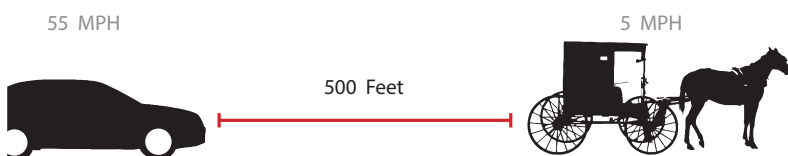
Roads in remote areas may present unique hazards:

- Roads not always designed for fast and efficient travel including unpaved roads, gravel surfaces, or roads without regular maintenance
- Blind spots, steep hills, sharp curves
- Narrow road width that does not allow for safe passing
- Lack of signs and poor lighting
- No shoulders or guardrails, deep ditches
- Obstacles including slow-moving vehicles, livestock and wild animals, fallen trees, landslide debris
- Railroad crossings without gates or lights
- Limited sight distance, tall crops and weeds
- Trees, mailboxes and utility poles close to road

These circumstances may require driving below the posted speed limit and using extra caution. In the event of a crash, help may be difficult to reach or take longer to respond due to the remote location. Here are some tips to help you stay safe:

- Always wear your seatbelt.
- Pay attention and be aware of changing road conditions.
- Gravel roads have less traction, so applying the brakes hard or turning sharply may cause your vehicle to skid.
- Slow down and be patient behind slow-moving vehicles. Only pass when legal and safe.

A vehicle driving 55 MPH will take only 6.5 seconds to cover 500 feet and crash into a slow-moving vehicle traveling 5 MPH.



## Deer Crashes

Fall and winter are the peak seasons for deer-related crashes. Fall is the height of Ohio's deer breeding season, so deer movement increases. With more than 22,000 deer-related motor vehicle crashes reported in Ohio each year, here are some steps motorists can take to help avoid a collision:

- Drive attentively in areas with deer-crossing signs.
- Deer often travel in packs – if you see one deer, expect others to follow.
- Highest-risk periods are from sunset to midnight, followed by shortly before and after sunrise.
- When driving after dark, use high-beam headlights when there is no opposing traffic.
- If a collision with a deer is unavoidable, it is usually best not to swerve – jerking the steering wheel may cause the car to spin out of control or into oncoming traffic.