



## 2. A Driver's Responsibilities

# Duty of Care

## **All drivers have a duty to take care to avoid crashing.**

The first responsibility of a road user is not to have a crash. A driver can be held accountable for a crash despite the fact that a road rule was not broken.

The traffic laws and regulations are designed to ensure that the traffic moves in an orderly and safe manner. No matter what the circumstances, the responsibility of each driver is to drive in such a manner as to avoid crashes.

If you are involved in a court proceeding, it is your responsibility to show that you took every reasonable care to avoid a crash or that you were proceeding in a reasonable manner. It is not relevant to consider only what others did. Duty of care is your responsibility.

People (road users) must not walk, drive or ride (a motor vehicle, bicycle or animal):

- without due care
- without consideration for other persons

We share the roads, we share the safety.

# If You are Involved in a Road Crash

If you are involved in a crash that causes injury to a person or animal or which results in damage to property, you should take the following action:

## Stop Your Vehicle Immediately

It is against the law to fail to stop after a crash. Penalties that apply include driver disqualification and imprisonment.

## See if Anyone is Injured

A person involved in a crash must stop and render all possible assistance and, if necessary and possible, get a message to Police, Fire and Emergency Services (call 000 or 112 if using a mobile phone). Follow the 'REACT' steps described on page 19.

## Prevent Further Crashes

- Unless it is essential to avoid further injury (danger of fire, explosion, traffic, burns from hot pavement, etc), do not move seriously injured or unconscious people until trained help arrives.
- Note or mark the position of your vehicle on the roadway, then move it clear of traffic.
- Ask bystanders to warn approaching vehicles.
- Personal safety – do not stand on the roadway. Always move to the footpath or to a place of safety.

## Give the Required Particulars to Other People

Give your name and address, the registration number and any other information necessary to identify the vehicle you were driving/riding, and the name and address of the owner of the vehicle if it is not yours, to:

- any attending Police Officer;
- any other driver/rider;
- any injured person;
- the owner of any damaged property;
- any representative of these people.

## Obtain all Details of the Crash

Including:

- estimated speeds of all vehicles;
- road and weather conditions;
- description of the damage and injuries;
- diagrams of positions and directions of vehicles before and after the collision;
- the names and addresses of as many witnesses as possible.

# If You are Involved in a Road Crash

## Report The Crash to The Police:

- if any person is killed or injured;
- if damage to any property (including an animal) is caused;
- if, for any reason, you do not give the required particulars to other people; and
- if another driver's/rider's particulars are not given to you.

Reports to the police must be made as soon as possible and, only in exceptional circumstances (such as having to go to hospital), not later than 24 hours after the crash:

- you must give the same information to the police as you have to give to other people involved, as well as the date, time and place of the crash;
- the police will also ask for details of other people and property involved; and
- the police are entitled to ask you questions about the positions and speeds of vehicles before and at the time of collision – you are required to answer these questions unless doing so would incriminate you of any offence.

## Compulsory Third Party Insurance

To ensure that compensation for victims of road trauma is available, all Australian jurisdictions mandate third party insurance cover for registered vehicles.

In the NT, the *Motor Accidents (Compensation) Act* details the cover provided and level of benefits payable on behalf of the Government through the Territory Insurance Office (TIO).

The NT Motor Accidents Compensation scheme provides cover for persons injured in a motor vehicle accident in the Northern Territory, including drivers, passengers, pedestrians, motorcyclists or cyclists.

For further details, contact TIO Motor Accidents Compensation:

Address: GPO Box 770 DARWIN NT 0801

Phone: 1300 301 833

Fax: 08 8941 1209

Web: [www.tiofi.com.au](http://www.tiofi.com.au)

# In an Emergency

It is likely during your lifetime as a driver that you will see crashes happen or be first to arrive on the scene of a crash.

Your actions on these occasions are vital – you might be able to save a life or prevent other vehicles from crashing as well. You may be able to call the Emergency Services and provide valuable help as a witness.

While there is no legal requirement to stop unless you are involved in the crash, it is really important that all drivers are aware of the need to lend assistance and act as responsible citizens and road users.

**If you come upon a road crash, take these basic actions:**

- R Respond** – park safely and protect yourself.
- E Environment** – Check for traffic and other hazards. Give a warning to other traffic by switching on your hazard warning lights and, if you have a red hazard warning triangle, place it on the road to warn other traffic.
- A Assess Casualties** – Quickly assess location, type of crash and number of victims.
- C Communicate** – Call 000 (or 112 if using a mobile phone) and communicate details to Police, Fire and Emergency Services. If possible, stay on the phone to provide further information.
- T Treat** – Even if you are not trained in first aid, you can help by applying basic measures to clear the victim's airway and control bleeding.

# In an Emergency

## Important points to remember if you are first on the scene of a crash:

- DO NOT remove a patient from a vehicle unless they are in immediate danger (eg. There is an imminent risk of explosion or fire).
- Check breathing and if necessary clear airways by clearing any obstructions and draining any fluid from their mouth and gently tilt their head back.
- Control bleeding by applying direct pressure on the wound (use a clean cloth or clothing, if possible).
- Remember the possibility of spinal injuries, keep the patient as still as possible.
- Keep the patient as comfortable as possible (provide shade, warm blanket etc) until medical assistance arrives.



Check breathing



Tilt head



Lift Jaw

## Further Assistance

Early intervention can save lives or decrease the impact of injuries, leading to quicker recovery or lesser injuries for the victims.

First aid skills are valuable in road crash situations or if a friend or relative is involved in an accident elsewhere. Courses in First Aid are available from St John Ambulance Australia (NT) Inc. or the Australian Red Cross NT.

## If You are Unable to Stop

While you must stop if you are involved in an accident, if you come upon a scene of an apparently serious crash and you do not wish to stop, telephone 000 (or 112 if using a mobile phone) as soon as you can if help has not already arrived at the scene.

Do not stop if the situation is clearly in hand. If you do, you may add to the congestion, hinder others rendering assistance or cause a further accident.

# Alcohol, Drugs and Driving

## Drink and Drug Driving Under The Law

It is an offence for persons to drive, start the engine or put a motor vehicle in motion:

- while under the influence of alcohol or any other drug so that they are incapable of proper control of that vehicle (commonly referred to as 'driving under the influence – DUI); or
- with a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) above the legal limit. The legal blood alcohol limit in the Northern Territory is below 0.05, except in certain circumstances where there is a zero BAC requirement.

## Zero BAC Requirements

People in either of the following categories must not have any alcohol in their blood at the time they try to start the engine, set the vehicle in motion or drive the vehicle: -

Category 1	Category 2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• drivers under eighteen years of age</li><li>• drivers who hold a learner licence</li><li>• drivers who hold a provisional licence</li><li>• drivers who do not hold a licence for the type of vehicle they are driving at the time</li><li>• drivers who are unlicensed or prohibited from holding a licence (other than failed to renew licence)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• approved driving instructors who are teaching, or are passengers for the purpose of teaching, people to drive</li><li>• drivers who have not attained the age of 25 years and have not held, in the Northern Territory or elsewhere, a licence to drive a motor vehicle for a continuous period of three years</li><li>• drivers of vehicles carrying dangerous goods</li><li>• drivers of vehicle of more than 15 tonnes gross vehicle mass</li><li>• drivers of commercial passenger vehicles, with or without passengers</li><li>• drivers of vehicles carrying more than 12 people, including the driver</li><li>• drivers of vehicles fitted or equipped to seat more than 12 people and actually carrying more than nine people</li><li>• drivers of vehicles carrying people in load space which was not enclosed by the manufacturer</li></ul>

# Alcohol, Drugs and Driving

The Northern Territory Government has recently strengthened laws relating to drink driving and in particular repeat offenders.

Failure to comply with the BAC laws may lead to you being charged with a range of offences including:

- driving under the influence;
- exceeding the legal BAC limit;
- refusing a breath test; and
- refusing a blood test.

These charges may result in financial penalties (fines), accrual of demerit points, cancellation or suspension of your licence and/or imprisonment.

Where a driver commits a second or further low level 0.05 – 0.08 BAC offence, or 0.0 BAC for drivers on a restricted licence, within 3 years, drivers will be disqualified from driving for:

- 3 months disqualification for a second offence
- 6 months disqualification for a third or subsequent offence within 3 years

## Cancellation of Driver Licence

People who are convicted by a Northern Territory Court of an offence of driving while under the influence of alcohol or other drugs may have their licences cancelled.

When a driver licence is cancelled, drivers will have to wait for the period of cancellation to end before applying for a new driver licence. For certain drink driving offences the driver will be obliged to complete a drink driver education course prior to being eligible for re-licensing.

An Immediate Suspension Offence provision applies to serious drink driving offences and repeat offenders. If a person is charged with an immediate suspension offence, a police officer may, after charging the person but before the charge is heard by a court, inform the driver that his or her licence is suspended, thus disqualifying him/her from driving a motor vehicle and require the driver to surrender his/her driver licence immediately. When the matter is heard by the Court, the period of suspension may be taken into account.

All provisional drivers convicted of alcohol offences who have their licence cancelled, will have to recommence the full provisional period after regaining their licence.

There are no special licences available in the Northern Territory for persons disqualified from driving.

# Alcohol, Drugs and Driving

## Motor Accidents Compensation

Remember: The excessive consumption of alcohol may drastically reduce your entitlement to benefits under the Motor Accidents Compensation scheme in addition to making you liable to pay for the cost of injuries caused to other people as a result of you driving under the influence. It is TIO's policy to seek recovery. The cost of bodily injury claims can amount to millions of dollars.

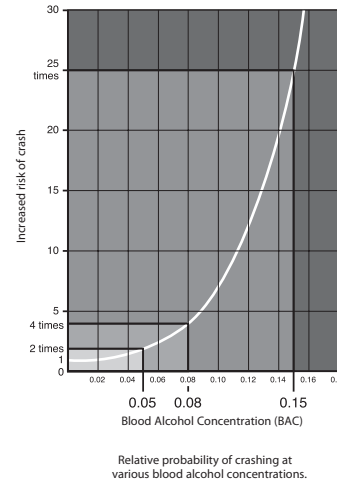
Consider the cost of a cab fare as against the financial and emotional consequences of a crash whilst under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

Few people understand how alcohol works or how it affects driving ability – and most people don't realise the risks they take when they mix drinking with driving or riding. When your inexperience is added to this mix, the risk is significantly amplified.

## Alcohol and Road Crashes

- People who drive after drinking alcohol have a greatly increased likelihood of being involved in a crash.
- Alcohol is one of the three major causes of road traffic deaths. Driver fatigue (tiredness) and speed also contribute significantly.

- Recent Northern Territory statistics show that over a five year period:
  - 48% of road fatalities were alcohol related;
  - 53% of drink drivers killed were between the ages of 16 and 20 years; and
  - 40% of drink drivers killed were between the ages of 21 and 25 years.



# Alcohol, Drugs and Driving

## How Alcohol Affects Driving Skills

**No one can drink alcohol without affecting their ability to drive a vehicle or ride a motorcycle or bicycle.**

**You don't have to be drunk to be dangerous on the road.** Although you may feel or look all right, your driving ability will be impaired, especially in an emergency, if you have been drinking alcohol.

This is because alcohol is quickly absorbed into the bloodstream, where it travels to all parts of the body, including the brain. When it reaches the brain, alcohol acts like an anaesthetic. It slows down and gradually dulls parts of the brain that are needed for driving. Once alcohol is in the bloodstream, its effects on the brain cannot be stopped or controlled.

**These effects include:**

- **Slower reaction time** when something unexpected happens (eg a car approaching from a side street, traffic lights changing, or people crossing the road).
- **Poor judgement** about your speed and the speed of other vehicles, and in judging distances (eg other cars seem farther away than they really are).

- **Visual attention and hearing** are reduced. After drinking alcohol, drivers tend to focus on the road straight ahead and ignore what is happening in their side vision (eg you won't hear or see things like cars approaching from side streets, or people crossing the road).
- **Poor coordination** when trying to do more than one thing at a time, especially in an emergency.
- **Confidence up – Judgement down**, leading you to believe you are okay to drive. You may take risks you would not normally take. This can be extremely dangerous as you may not be aware how seriously your skills have deteriorated.

Some people may show these effects after drinking only small amounts of alcohol, whereas others may demonstrate little or no change in their appearance or behaviour. Regardless of this, their driving skills will be impaired.

**Even small quantities of alcohol will affect your driving ability.**

# Alcohol, Drugs and Driving

## Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC)

The level of alcohol in your blood can be measured. This measure is called Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC).

### How is BAC Determined?

The BAC can be determined by analysing a sample of blood or by using a breath analysing instrument (“breathalyser”) to measure the level of alcohol in the breath.

The results are expressed as a ratio of the mass of alcohol (in grams) per volume (100 millilitres) of blood. In other words, a BAC of 0.08 means that there is 0.08 of a gram of alcohol in each 100 millilitres of your blood.

### When Can You Be Breath Tested?

The police can breath test drivers at any time. In addition Police can also test drivers who:

- have been involved in a crash;
- have committed certain traffic offences;
- approach a random breath testing station; or
- behave in a manner indicating a driving impairment.

Generally, the police will first require the driver to blow into a breath screening device, often referred to as a breathalyser, which will indicate if alcohol is present.

If you have a positive reading, or if it appears that you are obviously affected by alcohol, then you will be required to submit to a formal breath alcohol evidentiary test.

### How Does the Test Work?

If there is any alcohol in the bloodstream, a small amount passes through the lining of the lungs into the breath and is exhaled. As this bears a fixed relationship to the amount of alcohol in the blood, the BAC can be easily calculated by taking and measuring a breath sample.

There is nothing that will reduce the effectiveness of breath testing by these devices. Some people try to lower their BAC reading by ‘covering up’ the smell of alcohol on their breath (eg using breath fresheners, smoking or eating mints), however this does not change the amount of alcohol in their breath and their BAC will not be reduced.

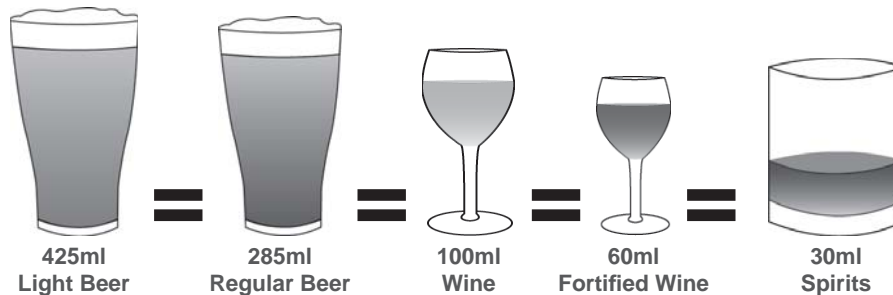
# Alcohol, Drugs and Driving

## How to Calculate Your Alcohol Level

There are a number of reasons why it is difficult to have a general rule to determine a person's blood alcohol level:

- Differences in body size and shape.
- Being male or female.
- How quickly the alcohol is drunk.
- How quickly the body gets rid of the alcohol.
- If any food has been eaten.
- Any one person drinking a set amount of alcohol can also reach a different BAC on different occasions.

However, as a guide, males drinking more than two standard drinks in the first hour could cause their BAC to go over 0.05 and only one standard drink per hour after that will keep it above 0.05. For females any more than one standard drink per hour could cause their BAC to go over 0.05.



But remember that the estimated BAC for a standard drink is only a rough guide. The effect of one standard drink on the BAC will vary from individual to individual.

## What is a Standard Drink?

We all know alcoholic drinks vary in strength. Scotch is 'stronger' than beer, port is 'stronger' than wine, and so on. A standard drink contains 10 grams of alcohol, the amount an average healthy liver can break down in one hour.

Cans, bottles and casks now state on the label how many standard drinks they contain.

Care should be taken when drinking at licensed venues as glass sizes and therefore the number of standard drinks may vary.

This illustration shows a number of examples of standard drinks. Each drink contains about 10 grams of alcohol.

# Alcohol, Drugs and Driving

## How Quickly Does Your BAC Fall?

Approximately 10% of the alcohol passes out of the body, unchanged, by way of the breath, urine and sweat.

Most of the alcohol in the bloodstream (more than 90%) is broken down by the liver. As a general rule, it takes the liver about one hour to dispose of the alcohol in one standard drink. This means that the BAC drops by about 0.015 per hour. While this amount differs from person to person, a BAC of 0.05 will take approximately 3 to 4 hours to reach zero.

There is nothing you can do to make the liver work any faster.

Only time will help you to sober up. Nothing can speed up this process – it is a myth that black coffee, cold showers, exercise, fresh air, vomiting, or home remedies will make a person more sober.

## Strategies for Safer Drinking

If you are going to be in a situation where you will be drinking, plan not to drive.

- Ring for a taxi.
- Arrange for someone to pick you up.
- Get a friend who hasn't been drinking, or arrange for someone who will stay sober, to do the driving.
- Use public transport.
- Stay the night – but remember, if you have been drinking the night before, you may still be over the legal limit in the morning.

# Alcohol, Drugs and Driving

## Other Drugs

The Northern Territory Government recently announced it will introduce measures to allow for the detection of drug driving. This will allow testing for the detection of suspected drug driving and the creation of a new offence for driving having consumed a prohibited drug.

Taking some drugs can also impair your driving and riding skills. Whether they are prescribed or non prescribed medicines or illegal drugs, many have side effects which impair your driving ability.

There is a great similarity between the drinking driver and the “drugged” driver. Both are usually not aware of any impairment of their driving skills, alertness, capability, vision or reactions.

When you are given a prescription for a drug by your doctor, you should ask whether the drug will affect your driving.

If you are still unsure, read the label on the container because most labels describe the drug’s effects or speak to your Pharmacist.

It is an offence to drive under the influence of any drug to such an extent as to be incapable of having proper control of a motor vehicle.

## Mixing Alcohol With Other Drugs

The worst thing you can do when using any type of drug, including prescription and illegal drugs, is to drink alcohol.

Research has shown that many drugs will have a worse effect on your driving ability if you take or use them and drink alcohol at the same time. However, the effects of combining drugs with alcohol may vary depending on a person’s physical condition, activity level, the type of drug and the amount of drug and alcohol consumed.

But, if alcohol is taken with drugs, the effects of both together may be multiplied many times. These effects can also be completely unpredictable and dangerous.

# Northern Territory Driving Conditions and Hazardous Situations

Hazardous situations can arise at any time. Always be aware of what's in front of you, behind you or beside you. Use your rear view mirror and your side mirrors at frequent intervals to check what other road users are doing. Always ensure that you and your passengers are wearing seat belts properly fastened and tightened (Seat belts – page 44).

## Breakdowns

If you see a vehicle that appears to be broken down, slow down as there may be someone trying to repair it or seeking help.

If your vehicle breaks down on the road:

- switch on the vehicle's hazard lights, or use some other device to warn other motorists of the hazard;
- get any passengers out of, and away from the vehicle;
- if it is safe to do so, try to ensure your vehicle is pushed to the side of the road; and
- avoid working or standing on the traffic side of your vehicle.

*Road safety...*  
*It's everyone's responsibility!*

**Remember:**

- ▶ **Speed kills**
- ▶ **Seatbelts save lives**
- ▶ **Don't drink and drive**
- ▶ **Don't use your mobile phone while driving**

For more information on road safety, contact the Road Safety Branch:

**e:** [roadsafety@nt.gov.au](mailto:roadsafety@nt.gov.au)

**w:** [www.roadsafety.nt.gov.au](http://www.roadsafety.nt.gov.au)

**p:** (08) 8924 7019 - Darwin  
(08) 8951 5354 - Alice Springs

  
Northern Territory Government



# Northern Territory Driving Conditions and Hazardous Situations

## Skidding

Skidding is caused by one or more of the following:

- excessive speed;
- sudden or excessive braking;
- harsh or excessive acceleration; or
- a sudden or unplanned change of direction (such as swerving to avoid a hazard on the road).

Factors that increase the risk of skidding are:

- oil or grease on the road surface, particularly at traffic lights;
- painted line markings;
- loose, wet or slippery surfaces;
- bald or excessively worn tyres; and
- faulty brakes.

The risk of skidding increases with wet surfaces and on roads with a shifting surface, such as gravel. Always reduce your speed in these situations.

Bald or worn tyres are also a major factor. Make sure your tyres have a tread that is at least 1.5mm deep and that they are correctly inflated (over inflated or under inflated tyres reduce grip on the road and may contribute to a skid).

Preventing skids can be as easy as ABC:

- **A**ccelerate smoothly.
- **B**rake smoothly.
- **C**orner smoothly.

## Footbrake Failure

If the brake pedal sinks to the floor, an experienced driver might:

- pump the pedal several times to see if enough pressure can be raised to temporarily operate the brakes;
- if this doesn't help, ease the handbrake on (with the release button held in), increasing the pressure gradually (sudden pressure can lock the back wheels and cause a skid);
- change to a lower gear (or ratio, if automatic); and
- use the horn and flash the headlights to warn other drivers.

## Braking With Anti-locking Brakes

If your vehicle has anti-locking brakes (ABS), in an emergency keep the pedal pressed down and steer away from danger. Do not pump anti-locking brakes when stopping in an emergency.

# Northern Territory Driving Conditions and Hazardous Situations

## Tyre Blow Out

If a front tyre suddenly deflates (blows out), the vehicle will probably pull towards the side with the blown tyre. If it is a rear tyre, the rear of the vehicle will tend to weave. Do not brake suddenly. Try not to overreact with the steering. Keep a firm grip on the steering wheel and brake gently to stop, keeping the car straight.

## Shattered Windscreen

Most modern vehicles are fitted with laminated glass, so a windscreen will only “crack” under impact and vision will not be unduly impaired.

However, if all the glass shatters and you can't see, slow down and use another way to see ahead (such as opening the side window and looking out). Gently put your foot on the brake to warn following traffic that you are about to stop. Come to a stop slowly and carefully. Stop as close to the left side as you can with safety.

Fill the demister vents and cover any external air inlet vents with paper or cloth. This stops pieces of glass getting into vents. Wrap a piece of cloth around your hand or use a steering wheel lock or other heavy object to punch out the whole of the windscreen. Wind up all other windows to

reduce discomfort and continue at a slower speed to avoid blowing out the rear window due to a build up of pressure inside the car. If the windscreen is only cracked, leave it in place and drive at a reduced speed with all windows wound up.

## Inappropriate Footwear

It is recommended that you wear some form of safe footwear when driving or riding. Thongs or other types of footwear without an enclosed heel are not considered safe as they can interfere with the operation of the brake, clutch (if any) and accelerator pedals.

# Driving on the Open Road

Hazardous situations can arise at any time, whether you are driving in built up areas or on rural or outback roads. Northern Territory roads range from first class all weather sealed roads, to unsealed dirt tracks. Distances between towns are vast and there are many driving hazards and conditions that are unique to the Northern Territory.

## Overtaking Lanes

Overtaking lanes give drivers of faster vehicles the opportunity to pass slow moving vehicles. You must always use the left lane unless you are overtaking and, at the end of the overtaking lane, indicate clearly if you have to move into the other lane, giving way to any overtaking vehicle in the other lane. When changing lanes at any time, you must give other road users sufficient warning by indicating clearly, and give way to vehicles already in the other lane.

## Driving at Night

At night time, including dusk and dawn, many serious accidents occur because of factors such as limited visual information and fatigue.

It is most important to adjust your driving to night conditions. Your driving speed at night should be adjusted to the range of your headlights. Drive so that you can stop well within the distance you can see.

## Lights

It is a legal requirement to have your headlights switched on when driving your vehicle between sunset and sunrise and when weather conditions make it necessary.

High beam may be used on any road, but you must dip your headlights to low beam when an approaching vehicle is within 200 metres, or when the other vehicle's headlights dip, whichever is the sooner. You should always dip your headlights when following another vehicle.

If your headlights are in a dipped position yet you continue to receive the "Dip your lights" signal from approaching drivers it is wise to have your lights checked. Badly adjusted headlights dazzle other motorists and can lead to collisions.

Do not look directly at oncoming headlights. You should direct your eyes to the left hand side of the road and drive well to the left.

If dazzled, you should slow down and, if necessary, stop to regain your sight.

Keep your windscreen and headlights clean and be alert for pedestrians and animals which may be hidden in roadside darkness, or which may unexpectedly cross in front of your vehicle.

# Driving on the Open Road

Do not drive with the interior light on. Pull the car off the road if it is necessary to read maps, etc.

**Stop and rest if you feel drowsy or tired.**

## Safe Following Distances

The recommended rule for ensuring a safe following distance is to use the time lapse formula. Watch the vehicle ahead pass a definite point on the road, such as a road marking or tree or sign, then count the seconds until the front of your car passes the same object. Reciting “1001, 1002, 1003” etc is a good way to estimate seconds. If you reach the object within two seconds you are probably following too closely. This method applies at any speed. If the road is wet or slippery, you should double the count to four seconds.

The driver of a long vehicle (longer than 7.5 metres, including vehicles towing caravans) must not follow behind another long vehicle at a distance closer than:

- 60 metres – where the permitted maximum speed is 60 km/h; or
- 200 metres – where the permitted maximum speed is greater than 60 km/h.

## Driving in the Rain

Rain not only makes it harder to see but also harder to stop as the roads are more slippery than usual.

Water, oil and grime make a very slippery surface on the road. These conditions offer less grip for your tyres and make braking more difficult.

When driving or riding in wet weather conditions:

- turn on your headlights (dipped) if it is hard to see through the rain. Your vehicle will be more visible to other road users;
- drive at a reduced speed;
- at least double the following distance between yourself and the vehicle in front;
- apply your brakes gently. Jamming on the brakes could throw the vehicle into a dangerous skid; and
- in heavy rain, it may be safer to pull off to the side of the road, switch on your hazard flashers and wait out the downpour.

# Driving on the Open Road

## Speed

- A 110 km/h default speed limit applies on all rural roads and highways, unless otherwise sign posted.
- A 130 km/h speed limit applies where sign posted on the Stuart, Barkly, Arnhem and Victoria Highways.
- Excessive speed is a major cause of road deaths.
- Always obey the set speed limits.
- All Northern Territory Roads have a speed limit. Always be alert and drive at a speed that suits the road, your vehicle, your driving experience and the weather conditions.
- You should always drive at a speed that allows you to stop for any hazards you may encounter on the road.

Speed is a factor in all crashes. Increased speed leads to an increased likelihood of a crash and increased severity of any crash that occurs.

## Driver Fatigue

- Driving long distances in high temperatures can cause fatigue – one of the most common causes of serious crashes!
- Stop and rest at least every two hours.
- Avoid driving for more than 8 to 10 hours a day.

- Use rest areas and commercial facilities located at regular intervals along major roads. Rest areas are located every 80 to 120 km and are designed for road users to pull over and rest when tired.
- Truck parking bays are for trucks and other heavy vehicles – avoid using them if you are not travelling in a heavy vehicle.

## Single Vehicle Rollovers

- Rollover crashes are a major cause of road fatalities in the Northern Territory and often occur when a vehicle drifts off the edge of the sealed road and the driver overcorrects.
- If you do drift off the edge of the road, let the vehicle gradually slow down, keeping the wheels straight and without braking ease the car back on to the road.

# Driving on the Open Road

## Road Trains

- Road trains may travel at speeds of up to 100km per hour, and may be up to 53.5 metres long.
- When meeting road trains on a narrow road, slow down well in advance and move as far left as practicable.
- To overtake a road train safely you should be able to see more than 1km of clear road ahead – further if your vehicle cannot rapidly accelerate to overtaking speed.
- The stopping ability of a heavy vehicle is not the same as a standard car. Slowing down, or braking suddenly ahead of a road train can be dangerous. A road train requires at least 200 m to stop, so allow enough space between you and following vehicles when you plan to stop or pull off the road.

## Animals and Stock (Cattle)

- Many roads in the NT are not fenced. You may encounter both large and small animals on the road. These can include birds, cattle, kangaroos, pigs and the odd camel.
  - Beware of large birds and other wildlife feeding on road kill.
  - You should slow down and sound the horn if necessary.
- Never swerve at speed to avoid animals, this is a common cause of single vehicle rollover crashes.
  - Whenever possible it is best to avoid driving at dawn, dusk and after dark as nocturnal animals and birds are on the move.

## Towing Caravans and Trailers

- Make sure your car and caravan or trailer are well maintained and meet all legal and safety requirements.
- Pay particular attention to tyre pressure and wear, brake system, lights and the coupling.
- Ensure your load is evenly distributed and that the caravan/trailer and car are not overloaded.
- It is law to leave at least 200 metres between vehicles over 7.5 m (which includes cars towing caravans and trailers) so that other vehicles, including road trains, are able to overtake.
- Pull over and stop regularly to let following traffic overtake.

# Driving on the Open Road

## Road Conditions

### Sealed roads

- Sealed roads are accessible by all vehicle types and are generally well signposted.
- The shoulders on some roads may be soft so great care should be taken if leaving the bitumen. Reduce speed before nearing the road edge and be cautious of edge drop offs, wash aways and loose stones.

### Unsealed roads

- Unsealed road surfaces may vary from gravel roads to graded natural surface (dirt) roads. Driving on unsealed roads with loose or shifting surfaces requires additional care and attention. Driving on these roads is a great deal more hazardous than driving on bitumen roads as control of the vehicle and braking is more difficult. SLOW DOWN and drive with more care than usual.
- Two-wheel-drive vehicles can be driven on most gravel roads, whilst a four-wheel-drive vehicle is recommended for natural surface roads.
- During the wet season some gravel roads may require a four-wheel-drive vehicle, especially at creek crossings and floodways.

- Dust on unsealed roads may obscure your vision and conceal ruts and potholes – slow down or pull off the road and stop until the dust settles. Leaving headlights on will help other vehicles see you through the dust.
- Slow down on corrugated surfaces as they can cause the vehicle's wheels to bounce and lose traction.
- Watch for approaching vehicles throwing up stones that may break your windscreen.
- Only overtake if your vision is clear.

## Water on the Road

- Some roads in the Northern Territory are prone to flash flooding. If you encounter a flooded road, check the depth, force and possibility of obstruction or deep holes before proceeding, or wait until the water level drops.
- After going through deep water always check the brakes to be sure they are working effectively. If water has reached the brakes they may not be as effective as usual. An easy way to dry them out is to drive for a short distance with your foot pressing gently on the brake.

# Driving on the Open Road

## Four-Wheel-Drive Vehicles

- It is recommended you engage four-wheel-drive when travelling on unsealed roads.
- Four-wheel-drive vehicles are designed for both on and off road conditions, and consequently they handle differently to a standard car. They have a higher centre of gravity and can also be more affected by wind caused by other vehicles.
- Ensure you are familiar with how to drive the vehicle and know when and how to use the various features (such as locking front hubs and engaging four-wheel-drive) and any accessories.
- If travelling off the major roads seek advice about local conditions, make sure your vehicle is suited to the terrain, ensure you have adequate equipment, water and other provisions and tell someone where you are going and when you will return.

## Pedestrians

- During the period 2000 to 2005, 19% of people killed on Northern Territory roads were pedestrians (NT Vehicle Accident Database).
- Keep a look out for pedestrians in urban areas and on rural roads, particularly at night.

