

A

accelerate To increase speed or velocity.

acceleration lane An auxiliary lane primarily for vehicles changing speeds as they enter or leave through-traffic lanes.

accelerator The pedal linked to the engine or motor throttle; controls vehicle speed by adjusting fuel flow to the engine, or power to the motor in an electric or hybrid vehicle.

adhesion Traction or friction, in automotive terms.

adjacent Next to.

adverse driving conditions Less than ideal conditions such as darkness, rain, sleet, ice, snow or fog.

administrative laws Laws regulating driver licensing, motor vehicle registration and operation, financial responsibility, and vehicle equipment standards.

aggressive driving Occurs when a driver operates a vehicle in a pushy or bold manner.

airbag A safety device that automatically inflates in a frontal and/or  other side-impact crash to prevent occupants from striking a vehicle's interior.

alcohol An intoxicating, depressant drug that slows the central nervous system and impairs driving ability.

alcohol dehydrogenase An enzyme that breaks down alcohol in the stomach.

all-wheel drive A vehicle in which the engine drives all four wheels.

alternate path of travel An emergency route to be driven if the intended (immediate) travel path is suddenly blocked.

alternator A device that produces electricity in a vehicle, driven by the engine.

alignment Generally refers to wheel alignment; the adjustment of a vehicle's front or rear suspension for proper steering, comfortable ride, maximum traction, and minimal tire wear.

altitude sickness Illness some vehicle occupants experience when navigating higher elevations where air is less oxygen-rich. Common effects include headache, nausea, and fatigue.

amphetamines Drugs speeding up the central nervous system; may give the driver a false feeling of alertness, leading to increased risk.

angle parking Arranging a vehicle so as to be positioned typically at a 45 to 60 degree angle with a curb or other forward boundary or limit, such as a parking lot line.

antifreeze A substance with a low freezing point, usually added to the liquid in a vehicle's cooling system to prevent engine freezing.

anti-lock braking system (ABS) Brake system designed to keep a vehicle's wheels from locking when the driver brakes hard or abruptly, or brakes on a slick surface.

automatic transmission A system that changes the vehicle's gears automatically.

B

banked curve A curve sloped upward from the inside edge.

basic speed law A law requiring drivers always to drive at reasonable and prudent speeds based on existing road, traffic, weather, and visibility.

barbiturates Depressant drugs slowing down the central nervous system and affecting emotions, alertness, attention, judgment, and driver response time.

black ice Difficult-to-see slippery winter road buildup; so-called because the ice is the same color as the road surface.

blind spot An area outside the vehicle not visible to the driver in rear- or side-view mirrors (**blind zone**).

blood alcohol concentration (BAC) The concentration of alcohol in a person's bloodstream, represented as a percentage; the ratio between the amounts of alcohol and blood in the body.

brake friction Increased friction between tires and road surface caused by braking, which slows the turning of the wheels.

blue light As produced by the screens of many personal electronic devices, light wavelengths beneficial during daylight hours because they boost attention and mood and enhance response times. Can interfere with a person's circadian rhythm in hours of darkness and delay the onset of sleep.

brake pedal Foot-control enabling a driver to slow or stop a vehicle; positioned to the left of the accelerator pedal.

brake system The system enabling a vehicle to slow and stop by means of hydraulic pressure.

braking distance The distance a vehicle travels from the point at which the driver applies the brakes until the vehicle stops.

C

caffeine A stimulant drug found in some coffee, tea, soft drinks, chocolate, and other foods and beverages.

cannabis/THC The active, mind-altering ingredient in marijuana.

carbon monoxide A colorless, odorless gas, extremely harmful to humans and other living beings, produced by internal combustion engines.

central nervous system In a manner of speaking, a human being's electrical system.

central vision The portion of a person's ability to see that provides the greatest amount of detail of objects and conditions. Approximately 3% of a driver's total field of view.

centrifugal force Natural force tending to push a vehicle outward (in a straight line) when rounding a curve.

certificate of title Proof of ownership issued by a government jurisdiction when a motor vehicle changes owners.

chevron alignment sign Warns of sharp curves and tight turns. Rectangular and yellow with arrowhead-shaped symbols confirming in which direction a road curves.

chronic disease An ongoing health condition that continues to affect the body.

circadian rhythm The body's natural energy cycle and general functioning over a 24-hour period.

closing The action or process of two or more road users' travel paths crossing or conflicting.

closing actions Driving maneuvers that increase closing probability.

closing probability The chances a vehicle and some other object will move closer together as the vehicle moves along an intended travel path.

clutch The pedal-operated device in a manual (standard) transmission vehicle that disengages the engine power from the drive wheels so that gears can be shifted.

cocaine A highly addictive stimulant drug.

collapsible steering wheel Steering wheel designed to collapse in a frontal crash to prevent driver injury.

collision insurance Insurance covering the cost of repairs for damage to a vehicle, even if no other vehicle is involved.

collision A crash when two or more moving objects hit one another with force.

color blindness Difficulty a person experiences distinguishing among colors, most commonly red and green.

comprehensive insurance Insurance covering damage to a vehicle caused by something other than a crash.

compromise In risk-management terms, if faced with two or more dangerous situations, giving most room to the one with the greatest chance of happening and with the most severe consequences.

communicate To exchange information by sending and receiving. In a vehicle, using turn signals, horn, headlights, gestures, and vehicle position.

construction warning signs Orange diamond-shaped warning signs used to advise drivers that crews are working on or near a road.

contact patch The surface area of a tire touching a driving surface.

coolant Liquid added to a vehicle's radiator to raise the boiling point of water and to reduce engine heat.

countersteer To turn the steering wheel back in the opposite direction in order to maintain or regain directional control of a vehicle.

courtesy lane change A safe lane change by a driver on a highway to allow additional room and opportunity for another driver to enter the highway.

cover-brake position Placing the toes of the foot over, but not pressing on, the brake pedal in order to facilitate faster slowing and/or stopping.

crash To strike another object or road user with force.

crossbuck The X-shaped regulatory sign placed at railroad tracks that serves as a Yield sign where the Highway Transportation System and the Railway Transportation system overlap.

crossing An intersection of user travel paths.

crosswalk A marked pathway used by pedestrians crossing a street or road.

crowned roadway A road higher in the center than at the edges. A crowned curved section of road can make left curves riskier and more challenging.

cruise control Device allowing a driver to choose and maintain a speed without applying continuous accelerator pressure.

curbside parking The positioning of a vehicle typically within 12 inches of right- or left-side concrete or stone edging without shifting to Reverse gear (backing).

D

daytime running lights (DRLs) A system that automatically turns on a vehicle's low beam headlights when the engine is running and the vehicle is in Drive or Reverse gears.

decelerate To reduce speed by reducing accelerator pedal pressure.

deceleration lane A lane used for vehicles to slow as they leave through-traffic lanes.

deductible The amount of money an insured person must pay for damages before an insurance company pays the remainder.

defroster A heating unit clearing moisture from inside surfaces of front and/or rear windows and ice from outside glass surfaces.

depressant Any drug slowing or inhibiting central nervous system activity.

directional control The ability of a driver to direct and maintain a motor vehicle along a desired travel path.

directional signal (turn signal) A signal telling other drivers when a driver plans to turn or move a motor vehicle right or left. It may be given by blinking a light on the right or left side of the front and rear of the vehicle, or as a hand signal given by putting the driver's left arm out the window.

dissociative anesthetic A drug causing users to feel disconnected from their own bodies.

divided highway A highway with a center median separating vehicles traveling in opposite directions.

double parking To park a vehicle directly adjacent and parallel to another vehicle parked curbside.

downshift To shift to a lower gear from a higher one.

drive shaft A power train component transmitting motion or power from the engine via the transmission to the drive axle(s) of a motor vehicle.

drivetrain The main propulsive components of a vehicle, including the engine, transmission, and clutch.

drive wheels The wheels to which power is sent by the engine or motor to propel (push or pull) the vehicle.

driver condition laws Laws requiring drivers to be in suitable physical and mental condition to drive legally.

driver licensing The issuing of permits by a state or other government entity legally granting persons the privilege of operating motor vehicles in the highway transportation system (HTS).

driver record Record of a driver's traffic violation history.

driving under the influence (DUI), driving while impaired, or driving while intoxicated (DWI) An offense a driver may be charged with, depending on the state, if BAC at the time of arrest is above a certain point or if the driver is perceived to have lost normal use of mental or physical faculties because of alcohol or other drugs.

drowsiness Tiredness; the tendency to fall asleep.

drugs Chemical substances having a physical and/or psychological effect on those who use them. Taken by people to achieve a real or imagined improved physical or mental state.

Dutch Reach A vehicle door-opening technique using the hand farther from the door to grab and operate the interior handle to better detect bicyclists approaching from the rear.

E

edge line Solid white or yellow lines marking outside roadway edges.

electric vehicle A motor-equipped car or truck powered by electricity typically stored in batteries.

electronic fuel injection (EFI) system A system timing and metering fuel flow (injection) into an engine.

electronic stability control (ESC) A system helping to prevent traction loss and aiding a driver in maintaining directional control.

emergency flasher A device that flashes left and right, front and rear directional signals on and off.

emergency vehicle A police, fire, or emergency medical services vehicle given the right-of-way when its lights are flashing and siren is activated.

emission-control device A device preventing or controlling pollution by regulating exhaust gases.

engine Part of a vehicle producing power by igniting an air-fuel mixture within its cylinders.

engine braking Increase in engine back pressure (drag) when the accelerator is released and the transmission is in gear.

entrance ramp That portion of a limited-/controlled-access highway connecting a surface street or road to an acceleration lane.

equestrian A person on horseback.

evaluating Processing driving information gained through searching.

evasive acceleration Accelerating aggressively or suddenly to avoid or reduce crash consequences.

evasive action A quick change in speed or direction to avoid a crash.

executing Carrying out one or more driving actions as a result of seeing and evaluating.

expressway A divided highway for high-speed traffic. Typically features crossroads and at-grade intersections.

F

fatigue Physical or mental exhaustion which may involve a tendency to fall asleep.

felony offense A major crime usually punishable by a jail sentence.

fender A vehicle component sometimes referred to as a quarter panel or side corner; the body part closest to a wheel.

field of vision Areas to the left and right you can see when you search straight ahead.

financial responsibility laws A legal requirement all drivers be able to prove ability to pay damages resulting from incidents for which they are responsible.

fishtail When the rear end of a vehicle swings back-and-forth during a rear-wheel (oversteer) skid.

fixed (absolute) speed limit A posted speed limit that may not be exceeded for any reason.

flaggers Women and men whose responsibility is to safely and efficiently manage traffic in temporary work zones. Workers may control traffic using flags or message paddles.

flashing red traffic signal Light indicating drivers must fully stop and yield the right-of-way before proceeding.

flashing yellow traffic signal Light indicating a possible hazard. It means slow down, check traffic, proceed with caution, and be prepared to stop.

flashing yellow X A special lane-control signal indicating that a particular lane is for left-turning vehicles only.

fog A low-altitude, or ground, cloud.

following distance The time and space gap between vehicles traveling in the same direction and lane of traffic; headway.

freeway A divided highway for high-speed through-traffic, with fully controlled access, overpasses or underpasses at intersections or railroads and interchanges at selected public crossroads.

friction Resistance to motion between objects when they are in contact with one another.

friction point The point at which the clutch and other power train parts begin connecting to transfer engine power to the drive wheels.

fringe vision The portion of a person's ability to see that is used to judge depth and position.

front-wheel drive A vehicle in which the engine or motor drives the front wheels.

fuel economy A vehicle's fuel-use ratio over a specified distance; usually expressed in miles per gallon (mpg).

fuel system Consists of the fuel tank, fuel pump, fuel injector or carburetor, and intake manifold.

funeral procession Vehicles traveling together as their drivers move from place to place, as between a funeral home and a graveyard or cemetery.

G

gear A wheel with teeth that interlocks with another tooth part, and in doing so, transmits motion. Gear choice determines a car's direction (forward or reverse), power, and speed.

gear-selector lever The lever allowing a driver to select a gear (also known as gearshift lever).

gore (area) A safety zone, typically identified by pavement markings, intended to separate traffic flows and travel paths.

grade A slope, hill, or incline.

graduated drivers licensing (GDL) An approach to ease new drivers into driving by providing practice and skill development under low-risk conditions. As drivers become more experienced, they are gradually allowed to drive under increasingly complex, challenging conditions.

gravity An invisible, natural force that keeps people and things on the ground. Affects vehicle speed, especially on hills.

green arrow Traffic signal used to permit drivers to move only in the direction shown by the arrow. Used also as a special lane-control signal when a lane is open to traffic facing the signal.

green downward-pointing arrow A signal light over a lane of traffic indicating the lane is open to traffic facing the signal.

gridlock A problem specific to in-town, city, and other urban driving environments in which streets intersect one another at 90-degree angles. Drivers in high-density traffic become interlocked with other vehicles and are unable to move.

ground viewing A low-level search by a driver for objects in or near the vehicle's path that may be hidden by shrubs, parked cars, or other large objects.

guide signs Provide drivers with information about routes, exits, and distances. Also assist with locating points of interest, recreational destinations, attractions, medical facilities, and motorist services.

H

hallucinogen Substance producing hallucinations—sights, sounds, etc., that are not actually present.

hand-over-hand steering A steering method in which the driver's hands cross when turning the steering wheel.

head restraint A padded device, typically adjustable, extending above seat backs designed to reduce crash-related whiplash or neck injuries.

headway Space between a vehicle and a vehicle ahead; following distance or interval.

high beam Bright headlight setting that projects light farther than low beams.

high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lane A lane reserved for vehicles with two or more occupants; sometimes called a carpool lane.

highway hypnosis A trance-like state that can affect some people who drive for extended periods of time.

highway transportation system (HTS) The network of roads and driving environments, people who use the roads, and the vehicles they operate.

homicide by vehicle A criminal traffic charge that can be applied to a driver who unlawfully and unintentionally causes the death of another person while violating a state law or municipal ordinance applying to vehicle operation or use or to traffic regulation (**vehicular homicide**).

hybrid car A vehicle using two power sources for propulsion, generally resulting in decreased fuel use. A common combination uses a gasoline engine and an electric motor.

hydraulic brake system A system of brakes working on the principle that fluid cannot be compressed. Fluid in the master brake cylinder is pushed under pressure through brake fluid lines. Resistance to this forcing activates brake cylinders in each wheel.

hydroplane When a vehicle's tires lose contact with the road surface and ride atop a film of water.

idle When the engine is running and the vehicle is not moving.

ignition A switch-controlled system providing a spark causing the fuel and air mixture to ignite and start the engine.

immediate path of travel The route to the point a driver wants to be, in normal traffic, at least four seconds ahead.

impairment A physical or mental defect at the level of a body system or organ; any loss or abnormality of psychological, physiologic, or anatomic structure or function.

implied consent law A law requiring a driver suspected of being under the influence to submit to a chemical test measuring the amount of alcohol in the blood. Drivers refusing to take the test may have their license suspended or may be charged with impaired driving based on erratic driving or behavior.

inattentional blindness Failure to notice an unexpected—yet fully visible—object because attention was directed to another task, event, or object. Also known as perceptual blindness.

inertia The tendency of an object in motion to resist any change in direction and of an object at rest to resist motion.

information sign Sign with easily recognized symbols, used to guide and direct drivers.

internal combustion engine A power source within which a fuel mixture is burned. Energy producing the vehicle's motion results from burning within engine cylinders, as opposed to from burning outside, as in a steam-powered engine.

interchange Any of the places on a limited-access highway where traffic enters or exits, usually by means of ramps and flyovers.

international symbols Traffic sign symbols using graphics for quick recognition.

intersection A place where two or more user paths cross.

interstate A highway belonging to the Federal Interstate Highway System. The system consists of over 46,000 miles of highways throughout the United States.

J

jurisdiction The power or authority to decide legal cases; a federal, provincial, state, or municipal entity.

K

kinetic energy The amount of energy required to propel a vehicle; affected by vehicle weight and speed. Also influences vehicle deceleration.

L

lane position Vehicle location on a roadway; strategically executed, reduces risk and communicates to other road users.

lane signals Signals showing which lanes are open to traffic.

lane-use lights Electronic traffic lights mounted above reversible lanes indicating which lanes can or cannot be used.

lap belt A restraining safety belt designed to protect vehicle occupants and which fastens low across the hips.

lateral evasive maneuver A quick, accurate turning of the steering wheel and vehicle swerving to avoid a crash.

lateral maneuvers Side-to-side movements by a vehicle

liability insurance Insurance to protect against claims in the event you are in a collision and are found to be at fault.

limited sight distance A driving situation in which line of sight is minimal or significantly restricted.

line of sight Distance a driver can see when looking in a particular direction.

loading zone Area reserved for authorized vehicles to deliver products to a business or warehouse.

low beam Headlight setting often used in city, in-town, and suburban driving; projects light over less distance than high beams.

LSD Hallucinogenic drug affecting the central nervous system, changing mood, and altering behavior (Lysurgic acid diethylamide).

lubricating system A system reducing engine wear and heat by coating engine parts with oil; includes the oil pump, oil pan, and oil filter.

M

manual transmission A vehicle power train whose gears must be changed using a hand-operated shifter and a foot-operated clutch.

managing risk To continuously and efficiently adjust vehicle speed and position in various traffic situations to maximize visibility, time, space, and traction.

mandatory Required.

maneuver(s) A movement (or series of movements) requiring skill and care.

manual distraction Sometimes referred to as physical distraction; a non-driving related activity in which a driver removes their hands from the steering wheel. For example, to reach for a loose object or to adjust the radio.

marijuana A mild hallucinogenic drug with varied user effects.

median A grassy, landscaped, or paved area separating opposing directions of highway travel.

merging The gradual, organized blending of vehicles moving in the same direction.

microsleep A temporary episode of drowsiness or sleep lasting a fraction of a second or up to 30 seconds during which a person fails to respond to sensory input.

mirror blind areas Zones outside a vehicle not visible to the driver in rear- or side-view mirrors.

mirror checks Quick glances in mirrors for the presence of objects.

misdemeanor offense Any minor legal offense. The penalty is usually a fine or imprisonment for under a year.

momentum Energy of motion; kinetic energy.

motor vehicle A self-propelled vehicle on wheels, not running on rails or tracks; for example, a car, truck, bus, or motorcycle; may include bicycles.

motor vehicle inspection Government-required inspections intended to ensure motor vehicles meet minimum operation or safety standards.

N

narcolepsy A condition characterized by an extreme tendency to fall asleep whenever a person is in relaxing or familiar surroundings.

narcotic Highly-addictive depressant drug affecting the central nervous system and producing side effects such as incoherence, dizziness, nausea, and vomiting.

national driver register A federal record of chronic problem drivers state licensing officials can check any time a driver applies for a license.

neutral The position in which vehicle gears are not engaged and cannot transmit power to the drive wheels.

no-fault insurance Financial responsibility coverage by which an insurance company pays expenses up to a certain amount arising from injuries suffered in a motor vehicle crash. Payment is issued regardless of fault or who caused the crash.

no-passing zone Area indicated by a solid yellow center line where drivers are not allowed to pass, usually near hills and curves.

no zone An area in front of, to the sides of, or behind a large vehicle where a smaller vehicle is difficult to be seen by a large vehicle driver. So-called because car drivers are to avoid lingering in these areas.

O

off-road recovery Returning to a road from a shoulder or beyond.

oncoming traffic Vehicles traveling toward you.

ongoing traffic Vehicles traveling in the same direction as you.

opioid A narcotic analgesic prescription drug used to reduce chronic (long-term) and acute (sudden, severe) pain. Can be highly addictive.

orderly visual search pattern A strategic method of gathering important driving information using an alert brain and active eyes.

overdrive gear The highest gear on most vehicle transmissions, designed to maximize fuel economy.

overdriving headlights Driving so fast in darkness that a driver is unable to stop within the range of the headlights.

overpass A bridge carrying a roadway or railway over a street or highway.

oversize load Cargo or freight hauled on a truck, so marked to alert other road users.

oversteer skid Occurs when rear tires lose traction, and the rear of the vehicle slides to the side.

overtake To pass or otherwise lawfully go around another vehicle on a roadway with multiple lanes of traffic in the same direction, as a freeway.

over-the-counter drug A medication or other substance available for retail purchase by persons of legal age.

oxidation An organic reaction in which alcohol (ethanol; C₂H₅OH) is converted by the body—primarily, the liver—to aldehydes, carboxylic acids, or ketones.

P

parallel parking Positioning a vehicle in line with a group of vehicles arranged one behind the other, parallel to and close to a road edge or curb. Unlike curbside parking, requires backing.

parent-teen driving agreement A written arrangement between parents and their new driver to outline responsibilities and rules related to the youth's safe driving.

park The gear-selector reading showing the transmission is locked; to bring a vehicle to rest in a parking space.

parking brake A mechanical brake holding the rear wheels, used to keep a parked car from moving.

parking downgrade Parking facing down a hill, slope, or grade.

parking upgrade Parking facing up a hill, slope, or grade.

pass To go around another vehicle on a roadway featuring one lane of traffic in each direction.

passive safety devices Occupant protection systems, such as airbags or head restraints, that function without a person having to operate them.

path of travel The course over which a driver intends to move her or his vehicle; typically, a visual control zone 12 to 15 seconds ahead.

pavement markings Paint and applications on road surfaces indicating lanes, crosswalks, no-passing zones, school zones, and travel path edges.

PDA A system of organizing the brain and eyes for effective, reduced-risk driving (Perceive; Decide; Act)

pedestrian A person traveling on foot.

perceive To identify, as elements and events in a traffic scene, relevant to a driver.

perception The process of obtaining information about a traffic scene, about which drivers formulate decisions and act.

peripheral vision The area of vision above, below, and to the right and left of central vision.

perpendicular At right (90 degree) angles.

pilot vehicle A car, pick-up truck, van, or sport utility vehicle accompanying a truck carrying an oversize load. Often marked as an escort vehicle with signs; usually displays flashing yellow warning lights.

PLAN Steps for using vehicle technology safely and effectively (**P**urpose; **L**imitations; **A**llow Time for Testing; **N**ever Rely on it).

point system Method of treating drivers in a uniform manner for traffic violations. Points are assigned for each traffic violation, and the number of points determines the type and severity of license action.

power brakes Type of braking system requiring less effort or pressure on the brake pedal to slow or stop the vehicle.

power skid Traction loss that can result when the accelerator pedal suddenly is pressed hard.

power train The main propulsive components of a vehicle, including the engine, transmission, transaxle, and clutch.

premium Cost of automobile insurance or other financial responsibility payment.

prescription drug A medicine or other substance assigned to a person by a physician, physician assistant, nurse practitioner, or other healthcare professional.

preventive maintenance Inspection and servicing of vehicle systems to prevent costly repairs or breakdowns.

R

reaction distance Distance a vehicle travels during driver reaction time.

reaction time Time a driver requires to identify and respond to a potential danger.

READ the Road Several key steps to lower a driver's risk (**R**ight speed, for right now; **E**yes up, brain on; **A**nticipate their next move; **B**ig **D**onut of space around you!).

rear-wheel drive A vehicle in which the engine powers the rear wheels.

reasonable and prudent following distance/interval Maintaining enough space (headway) when following another vehicle as to honor related laws and to minimize risk.

reasonable and prudent speed Related to the Basic Speed Law; a reasonable rate of travel considering available visibility, traction, and volume and speed of immediately nearby traffic.

reckless driving Operating a vehicle with willful or wanton disregard for the safety of other persons or property.

reckless homicide Reckless driving resulting in another person's death.

recreational vehicle (RV) A large vehicle, such as a motorhome, primarily used for pleasure travel or the country western band named The Good Ole Boys.

registration Record of legal vehicle documentation including title, license plates or tag(s), and registration card. Generally, registration must be renewed yearly.

regulate To control, direct, or govern according to a rule, principle, or system.

regulatory sign Sign controlling right-of-way, speed, turning, alignment, passing, one-way driving, pedestrian crossing, parking, and weight limits.

reverse The gear used to back a vehicle.

reversible lanes Lanes on which traffic direction changes at certain times of day, typically in rush hours and other heavy-demand times.

revocation State or provincial cancellation of a legal permit to drive a vehicle.

right-of-way The right of a vehicle or pedestrian to proceed before other traffic when there is a conflict; the duty to yield is granted by law or custom.

risk The chance of injury, damage, or loss.

risk management To continuously and efficiently adjust vehicle speed and position in various traffic situations to maximize visibility, time, and space, and traction.

road debris Unsecured cargo and other property causing disruption to drivers that can damage vehicles.

road feel Feedback a driver receives from a vehicle driven, especially through the steering wheel and seat.

road rage Occurs when a driver uses the vehicle or some other weapon to threaten or cause harm to another roadway user in response to a traffic incident.

roadway markings Paint and applications on road surfaces indicating lanes, crosswalks, no-passing zones, school zones, and travel path edges.

roundabout A circular intersection.

route Planned travel path; a way or course used to go from a starting point to a destination.

S

safety belt A restraining device designed to secure and protect vehicle occupants. Lap belts fasten across hips; shoulder belts fasten across the shoulder and chest.

seeing A deliberate gathering of driving information, using an alert brain and active eyes, via an orderly visual search pattern.

sedative A drug taken for its calming or sleep-inducing effect.

selective search pattern A pattern of observation avoiding distractions and focusing on things important to the driving task.

selector lever The control in an automatic transmission vehicle allowing a driver to change gears.

serial number Alphanumeric designation on a motor vehicle used as identification. No two vehicles have the same serial number. Also known as vehicle identification number (VIN).

shared left-turn lane A lane drivers moving in either direction use to turn left.

shift To change or switch gears.

shift worker A person whose employment hours vary significantly on a regular or routine basis.

shoulder The off-road strip of land along a roadway edge.

shoulder belt A passenger restraint system that fastens across the chest and shoulder.

sideswipe To strike another vehicle along its side.

skid Loss of traction by the front, rear, or all tires, generally resulting in a deviation from the intended path of travel.

sleep apnea A potentially serious sleep disorder in which a person's breathing repeatedly stops and starts.

sleep deprivation The situation or condition of suffering from a lack of sleep. Can be caused by stress, school and/or job demands, or poor sleeping habits.

slow-down, move over Laws typically requiring drivers approaching emergency vehicles stopped along the road to take action to reduce the risk of harm to emergency personnel.

slow-moving vehicle sign A sign on the back of tractors and other slow-moving vehicles warning they travel at 25 miles per hour or slower.

smog A combination of smoke, as from a forest or brush fire and/or vehicle emissions, and fog.

social inhibition A conscious or unconscious avoidance of a situation or social interaction.

space Distance.

space margin The amount of space around a vehicle separating it from other drivers and road hazards.

spatial judgment A driver's ability to accurately determine and manage space around her or his vehicle.

speed control System allowing a driver to choose and maintain a speed without continuous accelerator pressure.

speed limits Fixed minimum and maximum speeds set to consider traffic volume, road conditions, and types of vehicles. Drivers must not travel faster than the maximum or slower than the minimum unless conditions warrant doing so.

squeeze braking Gradual brake pressure increase.

stimulant Substance temporarily exciting or accelerating the function of a vital process or organ; in particular, the central nervous system.

summer ice Slippery pavement, especially at suburban and urban intersections. Common in warm-weather months, in the first few minutes of rainfall, following an extended dry period.

suspension (of license) To take away a person's driving privilege license for a time.

suspension system The assembly of springs, shock absorbers, and related parts insulating (protecting) the chassis of a vehicle against road shocks coming through the tires and wheels.

synergism A total effect greater than the sum of two effects separately; often used in reference to combining alcohol and other drugs.

T

tailgate To drive behind another vehicle too closely.

THC/cannabis The active, mind-altering ingredient in marijuana (Tetrahydrocannabinol).

three-point turn A turnabout performed by turning left, backing right, then moving forward.

threshold braking Applying the brakes to a point immediately short of ABS engagement (or wheel lockup, in a vehicle with a conventional (non-ABS) braking system).

tolerance The body's resistance to the effects of one or more drugs; needing more of a drug to achieve the same, previously-realized effect.

traction The contact between tires and road surface; the adhesive or holding quality of friction.

traffic circle A circular intersection.

traffic control devices Signs, signals, and markings used in the Highway Transportation System.

tranquilizers Depressant drugs that slow the central nervous system and may cause drowsiness; if combined with alcohol, they can stop the heart, reduce blood pressure, and halt oxygen supply to the brain.

transit bus As opposed to a school bus, a similarly large vehicle transporting passengers, typically in urban and suburban driving environments.

travel path The course over which a driver intends to move his or her vehicle; typically, a visual control zone 12 to 15 seconds ahead.

tread Vehicle tire surface area designed to enhance traction (grip), especially in adverse conditions, as in snow and on wet pavement.

tunnel vision A very narrow field of vision with little or no peripheral vision.

turnabout A turning maneuver in which a driver uses a series of movements to reverse a vehicle's direction.

two-point turn A turnabout performed by first backing into a driveway or alley. Although riskier, a turnabout can also be executed by heading into an alley or driveway and then backing into a street or road.

tyndall effect The scientific phenomenon in which light from a vehicle's headlamps is reflected into the driver's eyes as a result of suspended water droplets, as in fog.

U

u-turn A full, U-shaped (180 degree) leftward turnabout, so as to drive back in the opposite direction.

uncontrolled intersection The coming together or crossing of two or more streets or roads where the right-of-way is not identified, determined, and assigned via signs, signals, and/or pavement markings. Drivers navigating uncontrolled intersections must apply established rules of the road.

under the influence Impaired ability to operate a motor vehicle, usually caused by alcohol or other drugs.

underpass A passage or road beneath another.

understeer skid Occurs when front tires lose traction and a vehicle pushes wide toward the outside of a turn or curve.

uniform vehicle code  Vehicle laws recommended by a national committee and used in part by all states.

uninsured motorist protection Insulation from certain financial losses resulting from a crash involving a driver without insurance coverage.

V

variable speed limits Speed limits that change based on road, traffic, and weather conditions, generally communicated to drivers by changeable electronic road signs.

vehicle identification number (VIN) Number on a motor vehicle used as identification. No two vehicles have the same VIN (serial number).

vehicular homicide A criminal traffic charge that can be applied to a driver who unlawfully and unintentionally causes the death of another person while violating a state law or municipal ordinance applying to vehicle operation or use or to traffic regulation (**homicide by vehicle**).

velocitation Becoming so used to driving at a higher speed that a driver enters an exit ramp at far too fast a speed.

visibility The maximum distance at which an object can be seen under the prevailing conditions; range of vision.

visual acuity Ability to see clearly.

visual control zone The space 12 to 15 seconds ahead along a driver's intended path of travel.

visual distraction Involves a driver moving their eyes from their intended path of travel to a non-driving related stimulus, such as a cellphone or a vehicle infotainment screen.

visual field Area a driver can see ahead and to the sides; the entire area a person is able to see when their eyes are fixed in one position.

visual habits How the eyes are used to collect information.

visual lead The time and space available to a driver for identifying and responding to a traffic situation.

vulnerable road user Generally, any person at extra risk of injury or death because of not being enclosed in a vehicle (i.e., pedestrians, bicyclists, motorcyclists).

W

wakefulness A daily recurring brain state and state of consciousness in which a person is conscious and engages in coherent cognitive and behavioral responses to the external world.

wanton Senseless, unjustifiable, or deliberately malicious.

warning signs Traffic signs alerting drivers of potential dangers ahead; usually yellow and diamond-shaped.

weave lane Lane at a freeway interchange used by entering and exiting vehicles.

whiplash A sudden, severe bending and jolting of the neck backward and then forward as caused by the impact of a rear-end or frontal-impact motor vehicle collision; sometimes results in injury to the soft tissues and vertebrae of the neck.

willful Deliberate.

Y

yield To allow another motorist the right-of-way; to give way to another road user.

Z

zero tolerance laws Legal restrictions placed on drivers 20 years old and younger prohibiting any alcohol in the body when operating or attempting to operate a vehicle.

zipper merge A technique by which two lanes of vehicles form a single lane; so-called because the Lane A, Lane B, Lane A, Lane B method of drivers taking turns at a "pinch point" resembles the meshing of zipper teeth.