

# Beware: Falling Leaves Ahead!

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During the fall season, especially here in the mid-Atlantic and northeast regions, there is nothing like watching mother nature show off her beautiful coat of red, orange and yellows. The views are spectacular and really make you feel lucky that you live in a four seasons climate.

But don't let these colors fool you. Although Mother Nature's intent is to beautify, that coat of colors can be treacherous to the driver once laid on the ground. Leaves are as dangerous as they are beautiful once they hit the road and become soaked with rain. Did you know that leaves are a leading cause of driver's losing control on our roadways? It's like the old banana on the floor. Step on it and your bound to slip.

Few drivers, especially the newer, less experienced ones aren't really aware of just how dangerous leaves can be. Just one single layer of wet leaves can make braking, steering and stopping extremely difficult. Acceleration on wet leaves can result in fishtailing and loss of control.

Even dry leaves can present problems that you don't even see. Large potholes can be covered up when leaves fill the hole and giving the illusion to the driver that a flat surface is all that is ahead. Dry leaves can even present a fire hazard if they come in contact with a hot muffler, tailpipe or catalytic converter that reaches temperatures of 650 degrees.

It's easy to remind you to keep all your tires at proper air pressures and make sure that your tread depth is within specifications. But driving with leaves on the ground can take some skill. And we all know you don't want to mess with Mother Nature!

## Autumn Driving Safety Tips

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**Make adjustments for the light.** Did you know that we lose a minute of daylight every day until the clocks are set back in November? Fewer hours of daylight make it more difficult to see pedestrians, cyclists and children playing in the late afternoon. Also, later sunrises mean that drivers need to adjust to the brighter sun at different times of the morning. Always keep a pair of sunglasses in your car to shield your vision.



- **Steer clear of wet leaves.** Fall foliage is beautiful but once those leaves start falling and get wet from rain, they can become a serious driving hazard. Wet leaves are slippery and reduce traction.
- **Don't Veer for Deer.** If a crash with a deer is unavoidable, remember don't swerve. Be sure to brake firmly and hold onto the steering wheel with both hands. Come to a controlled stop and move the vehicle out of traffic to a safe location.
- **Prepare an emergency kit for your car.** Carrying an emergency kit in your car trunk or cargo area can be a real lifesaver. Be sure to include a flashlight, flares and a first-aid kit, jumper cables, extra washer fluid, nonperishable food, a jug of water, and a few basic tools such as wrenches, a ratchet/socket set, screwdrivers, and pliers.
- **Watch for frost.** Dipping nighttime temperatures bring frost to windshields and roads. Be sure to clear your windshield completely before driving. Also, decelerate or gently brake when approaching bridges and overpasses, as open surfaces are more prone to collect frost on the roadway surface. Stay alert for shaded areas that could create black ice during early morning and evening hours.
- **Plan ahead for changing weather conditions.** Have your car winterized before the winter storm season sets in. Keeping your car in good condition decreases your chance of being stranded in cold weather. Also, be sure to have a first-aid kit, thermal blanket, a working flashlight, a shovel and sand in your car.
- **Watch for construction work zones.** Construction work zones may still be active. Please remember to slow down and pay attention in work zones. The life you save could be your own.