Visibility Concerns

Driving can be challenging due to heavy traffic conditions, poor weather or distractions such as fatigue or illness. Driving with reduced visibility of the roadway, other vehicles and pedestrians is not only challenging, but also frustrating and dangerous.

The following provides some basic tips to improve driving when visibility is poor due to weather related conditions such as fog, ice, snow and low light due to dusk, dawn or night.

Weather Concerns

Prepare your vehicle for the poor weather conditions. Maintenance checks should be performed on all vital systems:

- Lights (high/low beam settings, auxiliary lights, turn signals, brake lights)
- Tire wear and tire air pressure
- Fluids and filters – especially windshield washer fluids and antifreeze levels
- Defrosters
- Heated (external) mirrors
- Emergency kits for breakdowns should be restocked or installed (basic tools, reflective markers, etc.)

Nighttime Concerns

At night it is much harder to spot pedestrians, cyclists and animals that may cross your path. Here are a few tips that may help:

- Keep your windows clean (inside and out) - this helps reduce glare and ease eyestrain – plan on cleaning the glass (inside and out) at least once a month
- Clean your headlights before starting on a trip - dirt on the headlight lenses can distort the focused beam and reduce their effectiveness
- Proper use of high beam settings and auxiliary lighting (i.e. "fog lights", etc.) can also help spot obstacles, pedestrians and parked vehicles at nighttime

Additional Issues for Visibility

- **Specialized equipment** may help with visibility:
  - Daytime running lights (DRLs) have been studied extensively in the USA and in Europe. Although these lights do not add to your ability to see others, many safety specialists assert that these lights help other motorists and pedestrians spot your vehicle sooner and more easily. DRLs can help reduce collisions by drawing your attention.
  - Replacement silicone blades for windshield wipers may also help keep your line of sight clear. Pure silicone rubber remains soft even in sub-freezing temperatures and will not degrade from UV light, ozone or prolonged exposure to heat. Typically, these blades last much longer and only cost a little more than traditional blades.

- **Have your eyes checked regularly.** If you are having trouble seeing, have your eyes checked. The solution may be as simple as new eyeglasses. Because our eyes change with age, clarity may not be as sharp and peripheral vision may start to fade. Older eyes need more light and are more sensitive to glare. While some drivers claim that yellow lenses can help fight glare at night, they can distort colors and perception during the daytime. Anti-reflective coating on lenses may help with night driving.
- **Be aware of "blind spots"** where it is difficult to see other vehicles.
  - Adjust the mirrors. You cannot eliminate blind spots, but properly setting your mirrors can reduce them. To make sure your mirrors are set for best visibility, watch a car slowly pass on the left. Make sure that before it leaves the rear mirror's field of vision, you can see it in your left outside mirror and, before it leaves the outside mirror's range, that you can see it with your peripheral vision. Do the same on the right side of the vehicle.
  - Move your head. Good peripheral vision is not enough, so it is important to turn your head at intersections to look for oncoming vehicles. Even properly set mirrors have blind spots, so turn your head and look over your shoulder when backing up or changing lanes.

"Reduced visibility is a significant factor in 42 percent of all vehicle crashes and contributes to the danger inherent in any maneuver requiring a fast and accurate visual response. Reduced visibility can be caused by lighting and weather conditions such as glare, dawn, dusk, dark, artificial light, rain, sleet, snow, and fog." **– US Dept. of Transportation**