

NOTICE OF PROPOSED GUIDANCE DOCUMENT

Connector November 2017 newsletter

Pursuant to Wis. Stat. s. 227.112, the Wisconsin Department of Transportation is hereby seeking comment on Connector November 2017 newsletter [Wis. Stat. ch. 346], a proposed guidance document.

PUBLIC COMMENTS AND DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION

Comments may be submitted to the Wisconsin Department of Transportation for 21 days by:

1. Department's website: <https://appengine.egov.com/apps/wi/dot/guidance-docs?guidDocId=OPA159>

2. Mailing written comments to:
Office of Public Affairs
Wisconsin Department of Transportation
4822 Madison Yards Way
PO Box 7910
Madison, WI 53707-7910

WEBSITE LOCATION OF FINAL GUIDANCE DOCUMENT

The final version of this guidance document will be posted at wisconsin.dot.gov to allow for ongoing comment.

AGENCY CONTACT

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State of Wisconsin Department of Transportation

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Connector newsletter - November 2017

[Connector newsletters](#)

[Connect with us](#)

[Law of the month](#)

[Media contacts](#)

[Events](#)

The Connector

- Collaborative road work project opens path to fish spawning grounds
- DMV's Medical Review Board helps keep Wisconsin drivers, roads safe
- 511 Wisconsin DMS Silver Alerts, teamwork help reunite man with family
- Drivers asked to give space to first responders working traffic incidents
- Taking rush out of 'rush hour' traffic curbs incidents, keeps motorists moving
- Winter weather travel tips to help drivers stay safe

Where the water meets the road

Collaborative road work project opens path to fish spawning grounds

Joe Starr — Nov. 29

While completing final inspection of a WIS 67 construction project in Fond du Lac County, Wisconsin DOT Civil Engineer Bryan Learst recalled looking down from the road's edge to see fish swimming in the stream running under the road.

"There were fish upstream of the box culvert," he said. "Couldn't get a picture, but they were there."

It seems odd—a state transportation road construction project manager pointing out fish swimming up a stream. But once you step back and see the scope of this project and how Wisconsin's roadways are so closely tied into the state's diverse ecosystem, you begin to understand why Learst is interested in seeing that fish are swimming upstream of WIS 67.

The Wisconsin DOT project was a collaborative effort led by Learst with plenty of help from his fellow Northeast Region team members and partners at Wisconsin DNR, Army Corp of Engineers, National Forest Service, Long Lake Preservation Association, Long Lake Fishing Club and design consulting firm AECOM. The Federal Highway Administration was another partner as it was their Great Lakes Restoration Initiative grant paying for much of the project.



Over several years, the metal culverts became perched above the water line on the downstream side, denying fish passage to upstream spawning grounds. That, their deteriorated state and being undersized for the volume of water traveling through the stream led to their recent replacement.



The "riffle, run, pool" zone layout started upstream and continued through the culvert, creating a more natural flow.

The restoration happening in this case involved an "aquatic organism passage" that reopened creek flow under the highway so walleye, pike, perch and other fish could reach upstream spawning grounds. The problem was that two culverts installed decades earlier at the location were undersized and over time had become perched above the water line on the downstream side.

Fishing club members and area residents explained during the project's initial information gathering stages that prior to the culvert (aka, pipes) becoming perched, walleye and other sport fish swam upstream to spawn. But when the pipes became perched, fish were blocked at the road. While fish can spawn in other locations, optimal and historical spawning habitats exist

upstream, says Wisconsin DNR Environmental Analysis Supervisor Bobbi Jo Fischer.

"Opening these grounds enhances natural spawning, which is preferred over having to manually stock the lake with fish."

The habitat between the WIS 67 culvert and Long Lake goes from a steep boulder and cobble stream to dredged channel with a soft, sediment-laden bottom. Neither of which is conducive to walleye spawning, said Fischer.

The culverts were in poor shape and identified for replacement early in the project, and as research progressed different options for restoring the stream's natural flow were considered. The solution was a box culvert design that would allow the creek to revert to its natural flow. Around this time partners at the Wisconsin DNR identified the FHWA grant program. Wisconsin DOT applied for and was awarded the Great Lakes Restoration Grant, which would cover up to \$700,000 for the project's development and eventual construction.

Creek realignment, wetland enhancement

Beginning upstream of the highway crossing, Learst said AECOM worked with Wisconsin DOT and its partners, designing stream improvements to reduce bank erosion and improve spawning habitat. Adding "riffle, run, pool" zones with a mixture of undulating flows and depths along the creek bed allowed varying habitats for fish and invertebrate life. Limited habitat restoration developed upstream of the culvert provided additional spawning opportunities.

Box culvert reopens natural flow

The existing pipes were deemed undersized as water would backup on the upstream side eroding the stream's bed and banks.

Replacing the small pipes with a 11 x 7-and-a-half-foot box culvert made a better match to existing stream conditions. Once constructed, stream bed material was spread along the new culvert's floor along with the ripple, run, pool zone, creating a continuous stream bed from the upstream through the culvert.

"The bed is a mix of everything," said Learst. "There's some bigger stones and cobble in there right down to fine stone and sand. We went to some of the nearby quarries and pits, and tried to get an idea of what was representative of that location."

Project success

Learst stood upstream of the bridge watching with satisfaction as fish made their way up.

"The project was a success," he said. "We eliminated the perched pipes, installed the box culvert and made the stream as natural as it could be. No more dammed water and the stream is conveyed correctly. And we have a box culvert that will last at least 75 years, if not more."

Fish monitoring

The project's success will be measured by a soon-to-be-installed fish monitoring system, which will count fish traveling through the box culvert. Wisconsin DOT and DNR team members are working together on this portion of the project with Wisconsin DNR ultimately taking the lead. The monitoring system will encompass the waterway and count fish currently tagged in the system.

Challenge of unknowns

The WIS 67 project took about two months to complete, and aside from some rain delays Learst says everything went smoothly.



Since the project's completion in mid-November, fish have been spotted upstream of WIS 67. The box culvert opened the stream to a more natural flow, allowing fish to reach traditional spawning grounds.

"Our team enjoyed the opportunity to take on something different and in the process work with a number of highly skilled, motivated and dedicated partners. It's part of what makes the work we do at Wisconsin DOT so satisfying."

[Return to top](#)

DMV's Medical Review Board helps keep Wisconsin drivers, roads safe

Terry Walsh — Nov. 22

Alzheimer's disease, diabetes and mobility issues are common health conditions that may cause a person to lose skills necessary to safely drive. But a disability or a medical condition are not necessarily reasons to stop driving. The key is how does the medical condition affect a person's functional ability to drive safely.



The Wisconsin DOT Division of Motor Vehicles' Medical Review Unit is responsible for reviewing and communicating with drivers identified as having a medical condition or behavior issue that could affect their ability to operate a motor vehicle safely. The Medical Review Unit also monitors school bus drivers for compliance with state and federal medical requirements.

What causes the DMV Medical Review unit to take action with a driver?

Driving is a complex activity that involves cognitive abilities – judgment, memory, clear thinking;

and physical abilities – good vision, quick reaction time, and the ability to move the head and extremities to operate a vehicle safely. [Medical conditions](#) and [disabilities](#) can affect drivers at any age. Sometimes the medical condition or disability is temporary and a driver license may only be cancelled for a brief period. Medical and/or behavioral conditions come to the attention of the Medical Review Unit from health care providers, law enforcement or citizens such as family, friends or neighbors.

A typical phone call to the Medical Review Unit might sound like this:

My mother has driven for decades and the loss of her driver license would be devastating to her. We are worried, though. Her memory and vision have been getting worse and we are concerned for her safety and we're afraid that she might hurt someone else. What can we do?

With compassion and understanding, the Medical Review Unit directs them to resources, including Wisconsin DOT's [Senior drivers page](#).

[Reporting an unsafe driver](#) is often very difficult for families, medical professionals or law enforcement officers. DMV staff works with each group to determine what is best to keep the driver operating safely with any appropriate restrictions, such as, 'daylight driving only' or '10-mile radius of home,' so that a driver can continue to operate a motor vehicle safely.

Note regarding aging drivers

Driving is the key to independence to many older adults. While Wisconsin DMV does not make driver license status decisions based on a driver's age, drivers and their families can use some DMV tools to help senior drivers determine when to limit or stop driving, including the "Be Safe, Not Sorry" workbook.

Medical Review Board

The Wisconsin DMV Medical Review Board is comprised of volunteer health care professionals and a facilitator from the DMV Medical Review Unit. The in-person boards are held monthly in either Madison, Marshfield or Milwaukee. Medical reviews by mail are also an option, if the individual appealing the decision requests it, though it is strongly recommended that the driver appear before the board to answer any questions the panel may have.

The Medical Review Board reviews each case and submits a licensing recommendation to the Medical Review Unit. After this board review, the Medical Review Unit notifies the driver by letter with the outcome: approval, denial or request for additional information. Even after a denial, the driver can submit medical information at any time if their medical condition has changed/improved. If a driver license is cancelled for medical reasons, the driver can submit new medical information from a health care provider or appeal the decision to the Medical Review Board.

Remember that a drivers' diagnosis alone is not as important as how the condition affects their ability to function as a driver. Wisconsin DMV works to ensure all drivers on the road are safe drivers.

[Return to top](#)

511 Wisconsin DMS Silver Alerts, teamwork help reunite man with family

Brian DeNeve — Nov. 21

You may have seen the Silver Alert displayed on Wisconsin Department of Transportation dynamic messaging signs every so often.

This is part of a coordinated effort among state and local agencies to help prevent a possible tragedy for missing persons, their families and others on the road.

The fast teamwork proved successful again this month. An 81-year-old Janesville man driving a silver 2016 Subaru Outback left his residence the morning of Nov. 16 to go to breakfast but never arrived. He was reported missing by his family later that day and investigative efforts found that he had been in Rockford, Ill., around noon.



Given that it is only a few minutes back to the Wisconsin border and the time which had passed since he was known to have been in Rockford, the Wisconsin Department of Justice issued a statewide Silver Alert just after 5 p.m. on behalf of the Janesville Police Department.

The [State Traffic Operations Center](#) Control Room, staffed 24-7, received notification and immediately initiated protocol to distribute the Silver Alert on the [511 Wisconsin website](#), [511 Wisconsin on Twitter](#) and all 157 DMS's along Wisconsin highways.

About four hours later an alert citizen in DeForest spotted the vehicle, which matched the one they saw on the Wisconsin DOT DMS and called law enforcement.

Since the August 2014 implementation of the Wisconsin [Silver Alert program](#), managed by the Wisconsin Department of Justice, 215 alerts have been issued. This is the second known success story - [the first being last May](#) - where Wisconsin DOT DMS played a pivotal role in safely locating a missing person believed to have dementia or some other cognitive impairment.

In addition to Silver Alerts and AMBER Alerts (missing, endangered children), DMS are used to inform drivers of crashes, construction, closures, delays, special events, road hazards, inclement weather and other traffic-related concerns. The signs help to provide drivers information they need to make informed decisions about the road ahead and play an important role in roadway safety.

[Return to top](#)

Keeping traffic moving, motorist safe all in a day's work for highway safety patrols

Drivers asked to give safe space to first responders working traffic incidents

David Hunt — Nov. 21

Flashing lights pierced the haze of a gray November dawn over the Madison Beltline.

It was about 7:30 a.m. on a Wednesday during morning rush – a busy time of day for emergency first responders. This time it was a crash. Other times, there's debris in the road. Someone blows a tire. Someone runs out of gas.

That's where first responders like Dane County Sheriff Deputy Eric Novotny come into the picture. As a member of the Dane County Sheriff's Office Freeway Service Team, it's his job to patrol the high-traffic areas on the Beltline and through the Verona Road Project to help get a jump on mishaps.

Timely and proactive roadside assistance can make a major difference for everyone's safety – not just the individual driver in distress.

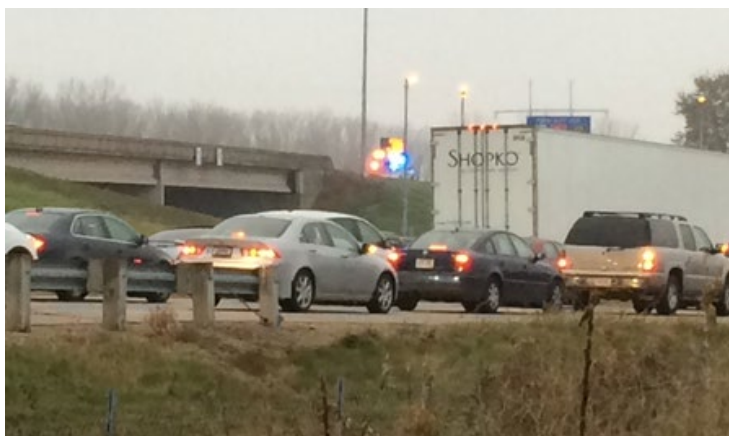
That's why Wisconsin is among a number of states that [organizes highway safety patrol operations](#) to clear traffic incidents, move disabled vehicles and manage other traffic hazards. Here's a stop-by-stop look at a day-in-the-life of the service throughout Wisconsin.

Morning Rush, Madison Beltline and Verona Road Project

Stoughton Road - Crash requiring traffic control on Beltline westbound at Stoughton Road. Deputy Novotny coordinates with fire, medical and tow services. It's important that drivers do what they can, even in the morning rush congestion to move over and drive cautiously to ensure safety to first responders.

Traffic stop at Verona and Raymond roads. A tractor-trailer driving southbound on Verona road runs a red light and Deputy Novotny makes the stop.

Traffic control at John Nolen Drive and Lakeside, off the Beltline. Drivers were alerted to the lane closure by the flashing lights of the Dane County Freeway Service Team vehicle.



Freeway service teams and all other first responders are there to keep motorists safe and traffic moving. It's important that drivers do what they can, even in morning rush congestion, to move over and drive cautiously to ensure their safety.

Lunchtime, I-39/90, Madison to Edgerton

Crumpled truck reminder to slow down, move over - Wisconsin DOT State Farm Safety Patrol driver, Vaughn, used a service lot to drop off the crunched shell of a black truck that had been in a wreck with two semis. A grim reminder to be careful on the road. "Please slow down and move over as you see us out there responding to these crashes," he said.

Birdseye view of distracted drivers - The flatbed service truck sits high off the ground, providing a clear glimpse of distracted drivers in the passing lane. On the phone. Putting on makeup. Eating. Reaching in the back seat. It's unfortunately an everyday danger for those, like Vaughn, who work daily on the highway.

Afternoon Rush, I-94, I-41 and I-43, Milwaukee County

130 motorist welfare checks so far this year - The 2003 Ford Explorer had been sitting on the I-41 shoulder for more than an hour waiting for a tow truck. The vehicle "just lost power," said the driver. Wisconsin DOT State Farm Safety Patrol driver Gadiel offered to move the Explorer to a safer place but the driver elected to stay and wait for the tow company he'd called. For Gadiel, this type of stop is common. The Milwaukee area safety patrols have performed more than 130 welfare checks so far this year. The idea is to help get disabled vehicles as far away from traffic as possible.



Move over or slow down is the law - A van with a blown back tire sat on the shoulder of I-94 westbound. The driver had called a tire repair service, which arrived shortly after Gadiel had pulled up in the safety patrol truck. The driver had declined Gadiel's offer to move the van to a more secure area. In cases like this, the safety patrol driver will turn on the emergency lights and angle the truck to help alert oncoming traffic. Many drivers took note and moved over. Still, many did not,

ripping by quickly enough to shake even the large flatbed.

Gadiel has been working in the safety patrol program for more than six years. There's a core point about safety he tries to impress on any driver he encounters at work: "We're out here trying to help you because we want to make sure everyone makes it home at night."

Maintaining safe scene until help tow truck arrives - Wisconsin DOT State Farm Safety Patrol driver Dale comes upon an SUV with hazards on the shoulder of the ramp from I-41 to US 10. The driver said they were waiting for a tow. Dale waited with the emergency lights activated to help make it clear to other drivers that there was a disabled vehicle on the road.

Hazards increase at sunset - As the afternoon commute materialized, Gadiel's duties picked up. A pickup truck skidded off I-41 South. An abandoned SUV sat right on the white lane marker of I-94 eastbound near 68th Street. Especially as the sun went down, the vehicle became more of a hazard to others on the road. In these situations, safety patrol drivers seek permission from law enforcement to tow vehicles off the road. Gadiel made the call, gained approval and moved the vehicle.

Afternoon Rush, I-41, Appleton

Maintaining safe scene until help tow truck arrives - Wisconsin DOT State Farm Safety Patrol driver Dale comes upon an SUV with hazards on the shoulder of the ramp from I-41 to US 10. The

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[Return to top](#)

Taking rush out of 'rush hour' traffic curbs incidents, keeps motorists moving

Joe Starr — Nov. 21

Highway traffic during rush hour commutes looks very similar no matter which Wisconsin city you're near.

The stream of red brake lights popping on and off is all-too common as drivers hurry to get into, through and out of roadways packed with cars, trucks and semis. But what if we removed the "rush" from our daily commutes? What would change? You might be pleasantly surprised to find out not much in terms of time spent on the road, with the big plus being a considerably calmer and safer journey for most everyone involved.

During a series of recent highway safety patrol ride-alongs in the Milwaukee, Appleton and Madison areas during National Traffic Incident Response Week, the [511 Wisconsin](#) team received an up-front look at the amazing work first responders are doing to keep drivers safe and traffic moving along some of Wisconsin's busiest highways. Understanding what the roads look like during times of high traffic volume from a first responder's perspective can be eye-opening and even empowering for drivers.



Deputy Novotny works to clear a crash scene as traffic passes feet away.

Here are some takeaways every motorist should know about coming from first responders whose workplace is often positioned just feet away from high-volume, fast moving highway traffic.

Go with the flow

"Go with the flow of traffic," says Dane County Sheriff Deputy Eric Novotny. Maintaining the same speed as surrounding traffic is a safe move, since vehicles are not having to pass one another.

The potential of an incident increases when vehicles change lanes, says Novotny who is part of the Dane County Sheriff Freeway Service Team. Aside from changing lanes to allow room for rescue vehicles on the roadside, to avoid debris in the road ahead or to reach an exit, most lane changes are unnecessary. The act of passing a handful of vehicles may get that driver a few car lengths ahead, but overall they will reach their destination at the same time they would have if they drove with the pack.

Putting a stop to unnecessary braking

While riding with Deputy Novotny, he demonstrated how drivers can safely travel much of the 16-mile stretch of Beltline highway he patrols during the busy morning rush without touching the brake pedal. While proper application of the brake pedal is an essential function for every driver, the pedal's use especially in rush hour traffic is often excessive and to a fault.

Everyone has contributed to the “accordion effect” of start-stop traffic where they see brake lights ahead so the first impulse is to apply their own brakes. That behavior continues for drivers who follow, with lights coming on faster and faster as the gap between bumpers narrows until the stop comes too late resulting in one or multiple rear-end crashes. The accordion effect is a top contributor to rear-end collisions, but Novotny’s strategy goes a long way to curing its cause.

And it makes sense. If the brake lights of the car in front of us come on, we think that we should do the same to avoid hitting them. But what if we are far enough behind that car, anywhere from five to eight car lengths back, so when brake lights appear in front of us rather than applying our brakes we let off the accelerator and use the gap we’ve allowed to coast for awhile. This creates a more gradual traffic slowdown. Rather than brake lights coming up, drivers who follow see an easy deceleration of traffic to which they follow the lead and safely slow their speeds without incident.

Rethinking exit, entry ramp use

Highway entry and exit ramps are another point of high incident occurrence as drivers change lanes entering or leaving the highway. Even though many ramps extend for several hundred yards, drivers think they need to make their lane change right at the point where the egress-ingress comes available often leading to traffic hazards and backups, says Novotny, adding that rather than join in on the melee of autos jockeying for position, be patient and drive a bit farther.

“Everyone wants to get over right when the lane comes available, whereas if they continued in the lane they’re in a few seconds longer they will likely find a clear path for a safe lane change.”

Keep your eyes on the road

It sounds cliché, but that’s because it is true. Drivers who keep their eyes focused on the road in front of them avoid incidents. This includes not being distracted by looking at incidents in progress. Novotny says many secondary incidents occur because drivers take their attention away from driving to look at first responders working a crash scene or another incident they are passing.

He uses an example of children and candy. If there is candy in eyeshot of most children, they will be distracted by its presence inhibiting their ability to concentrate on anything else, he says.

“But remove that candy from their sight and the distraction is gone allowing them to focus.” Adult drivers, he says, can and should have the mental muscle to set aside their temptation to look at a roadside incident, and concentrate on the road and what is coming ahead.

'Steer It Clear It' is law

The confusion surrounding the "Steer It Clear It" law is one that Novotny says is common among motorists involved in traffic crashes. The popular misconception, he says, being that they need to keep the vehicles in the post-crash position until police arrive so they can make an accurate report for insurance purposes.

“This is incorrect,” says Novotny. “The law says that if no one has been injured and the vehicle can still be driven, move it out of traffic. Responding officers can and will be able to assess a crash scene after the vehicles are steered and cleared to a safe place away from traffic.”

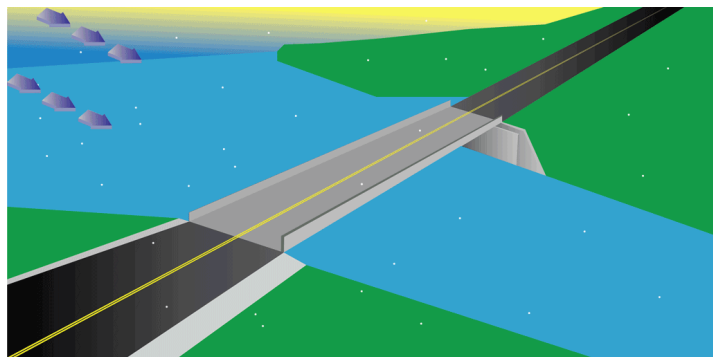
[Return to top](#)

Winter weather travel tips to help drivers stay safe

Wisconsin DOT — Nov. 3

Whoever decided that winter’s official start was Dec. 21 had obviously never been to Wisconsin after Halloween.

While the winter solstice falls on the 21st of December, winter in many parts of Wisconsin has already arrived. With that arrival comes the need to rethink driving habits. Cold temperatures bring potential for snow and ice covering driving surfaces. Here are some travel safety tips to help you navigate Wisconsin's winter weather.



Pay extra close attention when approaching bridges as ice forms faster on bridge decks than other road surfaces.

Reduce speed when snow, ice, rain or fog are present. Beyond it being good practice, state law requires drivers to reduce speed according to driving conditions so to maintain vehicle control. Posted speed limits apply when driving conditions are ideal. When a driver slides off a wintry roadway, it's generally best to remain buckled up inside the vehicle until help arrives.

Cancel or postpone trips when wintry conditions make travel hazardous and reschedule for when conditions improve. If travel is a must, alerting others of the route

being taken and expected arrival time are good safety measures. Use safety belts, slow down, and allow extra time and following distance.

Plan ahead of the trip with 511 Wisconsin to check on road conditions and incidents. Winter traffic crashes can occur when drivers feel rushed and go too fast for conditions. Planning for conditions by taking weather and road conditions into account allows travelers to understand before they get on the road what to expect and how much extra time is needed to reach a destination.

Don't drive during major winter storms. Stranded vehicles become hazards along snowy highways. For the safety of all drivers and to help snowplow operators, stay off roadways if possible during major winter storms. If travel is unavoidable, drivers should buckle-up, slow down and stay at least 200 feet behind a working snowplow.

Driving tips for every day of the year

Stopping along a highway is dangerous. For drivers whose vehicles break down, slide off the road or hit a deer, it's generally safest for all occupants to remain buckled up inside the vehicle until help arrives. Walking on or around a highway invites the risk of being struck by other vehicles.

Drivers who speed, risk much more than a costly citation. Speeding greatly reduces reaction time and contributes to more serious crashes. During an average year in Wisconsin, speed-related crashes result in some 7,700 injuries and about 160 traffic deaths.

Distracted driving comes in many dangerous forms, but the one thing they all have in common is they're dangerous. Texting or talking on a cell phone, checking messages, eating, fiddling with the radio all take attention from what should be a driver's primary focus – the road in front of them.

Wisconsin's Move Over Law requires drivers to slow down and move over if possible to create a safety zone for emergency vehicles stopped along the roadway with warning lights flashing. This includes police and fire department vehicles, ambulances, tow trucks and highway maintenance crews.

Slower traffic should keep right on multi-lane roadways so faster moving vehicles can use the left lane to pass. Let law enforcement handle potential speeders. Along with being illegal, lingering in the passing lane at speeds slower than the posted speed limit and impeding traffic flow can result in crashes or road rage incidents.

Buckling up is more than just a legal requirement - it is the single most effective way to prevent being ejected from a vehicle or thrown about violently in the event of a crash. While almost

nine out of ten Wisconsin motorists buckle-up, increasing the use of safety belts will save lives. Whether on a long trip or driving across town, buckle-up, every trip, every time, and in every seat.

[Return to top](#)

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