



Dear Friend:

Our state is home to many picturesque roadways lined with natural beauty and priceless views, such as those along the Hudson River, the Catskill Mountains, and the Adirondacks. The luxury of owning a vehicle allows us to take advantage of New York's scenic drives, and every weekend many people load up their car, truck or motorcycle to take advantage of a few hours on the open road.

But along with the freedom and pleasure that driving can bring comes responsibility — for your own safety, the safety of your passengers, and other motorists sharing the road.

To make your life a little easier, I've prepared this brochure which outlines useful information on the State's Motor Vehicle laws, consumer rights surrounding purchasing a vehicle, safety tips for older drivers, facts about the recent law regarding cell phone use while driving, and other useful information about operating your vehicle.

I hope you find this compilation helpful. As always, if you have any questions or if I can be of any assistance to you, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Suzi Oppenheimer
Senator Suzi Oppenheimer

Rules of the Road

Here's a sampling of motor vehicle laws that all New York drivers should know about

Drive 65 — Here and There:

New York law permits motorists to drive 65 miles per hour, instead of 55, on parts of several major roadways in the State. The law made New York the 46th state to raise its maximum speed limit to 65, and applies to a number of major highways, including much of the New York State Thruway (I-87 & I-90) and the Adirondack Northway (I-87).

Running Red Light Is a Costly Mistake:

Those who habitually race red lights — and lose — will need to reach deep into their pockets to satisfy stiff fines. In addition, they may also have to spend some time behind bars.

Lights On, Lower Premiums:

If you drive a car with daytime running lamps — headlights that come on every time you start the vehicle — you may be eligible for a break on your auto insurance premium. The headlights must be factory installed, and the premium reduction only applies to non-commercial policies.

Different Rates for Different Drivers:

A multi-tier program for motor vehicle insurance allows insurers to offer a series of different basic rates to motorists based on their driving records. This is intended to offer greater options for motorists, permitting participating insurers to provide coverage for both good drivers and those with spotty records who might otherwise be forced to seek insurance in the expensive assigned risk market.

Carjacking Penalties Steep:

To provide strict punishments for crimes in which motor vehicles are forcibly stolen, often with violence while a driver is behind the wheel, a state law permits specific penalties for so-called "carjacking" offenses. Under the law, carjacking is a second-degree robbery, a class "C" felony carrying a maximum sentence of up to 15 years in prison.

School Buses and Traffic Safety



According to estimates by the New York State Department of Motor Vehicles, 50,000 cars and trucks illegally pass school buses every day. In the last 4 years, 35 students were hit by New York State motorists passing stopped school buses.

REMEMBER — If the bus' red lights are flashing, YOU MUST STOP. It's the law!

Penalties for Passing a Stopped School Bus

By Conviction	Minimum Fine	Maximum Fine	Possible Imprisonment
1st Conviction	\$250.00	\$400.00	Up to 30 days
2nd Conviction (within 3 years)	\$600.00	\$750.00	Up to 180 days
3rd or Subsequent Convictions (within 3 years)	\$750.00	\$850.00	Up to 180 days

Driving Do's & Don'ts

Do's

Do... Remember, that air bags and children do not mix. Buckle all children up whether they use child safety seats or the vehicle's seat belts. Children under the age of 12 should ride in the safest place in the car — the back seat.

Do... Make sure that you and your front-seat passengers wear seat belts whenever the car is in motion. Failure to buckle up could not only jeopardize your safety, but your wallet as well.

Do... Use a child safety seat to protect your young ones when they're riding with you in the car. Remember to buckle up youngsters under 16 if they're back-seat passengers.

Do... Obey state law by turning on your headlights in rain, snow, and other inclement weather. Your visibility will be improved, and just as important, other drivers will be able to see you.

Do... Make sure that all of your lights, turn signals, and your automobile horn are in proper working order. To avoid accidents and traffic tickets, be aware that other drivers need to be able to see you, hear you and know where you're going.

Don'ts

Don't... Park in a spot reserved for the disabled when you aren't eligible to use it — not even for a minute. Illegally using a spot designated as parking for the disabled is cruel, and could subject you to a hefty fine (up to \$75 for a first offense).

Don't... Drive under the influence of alcohol or drugs. You could hurt yourself and others, and depending on your offense, you could be charged a steep fine, lose your license, or do time in jail. Wouldn't it be better to call a taxi or a friend for that ride home?

Don't... Fail to yield the right of way to emergency vehicles. That fire truck could be rushing to your house, and that ambulance might be taking someone you care about to the hospital.

What you should know about Graduated Licensing

All teenagers are eager to receive their licenses and the freedom that goes along with it. These days they have more resources at their disposal than ever before, such as driver's education courses available in almost every community. But along with this privilege comes much responsibility and strict regulations. Graduated licensing is a law that affects drivers under the age of 18, and details the rights and restrictions related to drivers between the ages of 16 and 18.

New York's graduated licensing law was implemented on September 1, 2003. This law affects drivers under the age of 18, who are known as "junior drivers," receiving their senior driving privileges, and the law changes some of the restrictions on junior drivers.

The rules for junior drivers are simple—they cannot operate a vehicle that has more than two passengers who are under the age of 21, unless a parent, guardian, or driving instructor also rides in the vehicle, or if the passengers are immediate family members. In addition, the supervising driver, who must be over the age of 21, has to ride in the front passenger seat. Some additional rules for junior drivers are as follows:

- For junior drivers who were issued learner permits on or after September 1, 2003, a completed certification of 20 hours of supervised driving must be brought to the road test. This form certifies that the junior driver has had a minimum of 20 hours of supervised driving experience.

- When a junior driver passes a road test more than 6 months after s/he has received his/her learner permit, s/he will be issued a normal junior license. If it has been less than 6 months, s/he will be issued a limited-use junior license.

- The limited-use junior license allows the driver to drive without supervision during specific hours of the day and within specific geographical boundaries. The driver must be supervised at all times. Six months after the date of the learner permit was issued, the DMV will replace the limited-use license with a normal junior license.

Drivers holding a junior license specifically in Westchester County may drive alone between 5 am and 9 pm. After 9 pm a junior licensed driver may only drive without supervision if s/he is traveling between home and employment, or to and from a school course.

Riding without a seat belt carries a fine up to \$50, and \$100 if a motorist is stopped for having a person less than 16 years old unrestrained.



Safety Concerns and Tips for Older Drivers

With the number of elderly drivers increasing in recent years, many people have begun to worry that seniors who drive may pose a safety risk to themselves and their passengers, as well as to pedestrians and the occupants of other cars on the road. In fact, age alone is not an accurate indicator of a person's ability or inability to operate a motor vehicle.

More importantly, you or the older driver you care about should pay close attention to health conditions, prescription drug combinations, and physical limitations that could hinder a person's ability to drive safely. Below are some possible safety concerns that you should be aware of, as well as some tips for older drivers.

Indicators of Unsafe Driving by an Individual:

- Doesn't obey traffic signals
- Drives well below the speed limit
- Gets lost in familiar areas on a regular basis
- Drives aggressively or stops inappropriately
- Doesn't pay attention to other vehicles, bicyclists, pedestrians or road hazards
- Has trouble staying in designated lane
- Has been ticketed frequently or been involved in numerous fender benders

If you or an older person you care about demonstrates more than one of these behaviors, you — or they — may want to either consider arranging alternate transportation or utilizing public transportation.

Tips for Older Drivers:

- Enroll in an AARP 55 Alive/Mature Driving Program, which is an accident prevention program specifically geared toward older drivers.
- Check that your vehicle, or the vehicle you are purchasing, has automatic transmission, power brakes and steering, and air bags.
- Position your seat so that you are sitting 10 inches from the steering wheel in order to prevent being injured if your air bag is deployed during an accident.
- If you have a physical disability, you can purchase equipment to accommodate your physical limitations. These include:
 - Seat belt adapters
 - Full view inside mirrors and side "spot" mirrors
 - Brighter and extra loud turn signals
 - Left foot accelerator if limited/no use of right foot
 - Scooter and wheel chair loading devices
 - Keyless ignition

For information about AARP's 55 Alive Driving Program, call 1-888-227-7669 or visit the AARP website at www.aarp.org/

Do You Talk & Drive?

If you answered "yes," you may be putting yourself, your passengers, and other drivers at risk for automobile accidents. **On June 28, 2001**, an addition to New York State's traffic law was passed that reads, **"no person shall operate a motor vehicle upon a public highway while using a mobile telephone while such vehicle is in motion."** The law — which became **effective December 1, 2001** — was enacted to reduce the occurrence of motor vehicle accidents caused by distracted driving. Failure to abide by the law will result in a **\$100 fine**.

While hands-free mobile phones are acceptable to use while driving, motorists are encouraged to refrain from making and receiving calls in difficult and busy traffic conditions.

If you are reporting an accident or another emergency situation on a mobile phone while driving, no violation occurs under this law.

Senator Suzi Oppenheimer



A Glaring Concern

Glare can cause fatigue and stress, making driving more difficult, and increasing your chances of an accident.

Here are a few tips to help you minimize the effects of glare while you are driving.*

- If the headlights from oncoming cars are too bright, keep your eyes straight ahead, or look slightly to the right.
- Adjust your side mirrors to properly minimize glare from cars behind you.
- Make sure all the glass on your vehicle (headlights, windshield, windows, and mirrors) is clean! Dirty glass surfaces help to create glare.
- Make sure that your headlights are aimed correctly (and clean); do not use fog lights if there is no fog present.
- If you wear eyeglasses or contact lenses, ALWAYS wear them when driving. Make sure they are clean and free of scratches. Antireflective materials (such as zircon and silicon) also help reduce glare.

* (compiled from Westways Magazine archives).

Important Informational Websites & Toll-Free Telephone Numbers:

NYS Senior Citizens' Hot Line	1-800-342-9871
NYS Consumer Protection Board	1-800-697-1220
NYS Police Emergency	911
Deaf/Hearing Impaired (Voice & TDD)	1-800-342-4357
NYS Dept. of Transportation	www.dot.state.ny.us
Senior Drivers Info.	www.seniordrivers.org
Road Conditions & Construction Updates	1-800-THRUWAY (1-800-847-8929)
Suspected Drunk Driver	911
.....	1-800-CURB DWI (1-800-287-2394)