

The differences between country and highway driving

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EXTRACT

Driving experts suggest motorists have different strategies in mind for when they get behind the wheel based on where they're located - the highway or the country

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When out on the road, drivers witness a variety of roadway conditions that ultimately have an influence on safety, such as the condition of the roads, the level of traffic and what the weather is like. And as multifaceted as these driving factors can be, so too are the parts of the country on which people drive, as highway driving and country driving are two separate entities - so much so that driving experts suggest motorists have different strategies in mind based on where motorists are located.

Perhaps the biggest difference between highway and country driving is the shape of the roads. Traditionally, highways are straight, making it ideal for traveling at high rates of speed. Meanwhile, country driving contrasts sharply from highway driving, mainly because the streets are more winding and narrower. They're also frequently lined with residential locations, which increases the risk of encountering an accident if traveling at a high rate of speed.

Just as the physical roadway conditions differ, so too do the potential situations that could lead to an accident. For example, depending on the time of day, the highway can be free flowing and amenable to traveling at or slightly above the speed limit. However, during the early morning or late afternoon hours - the time traditionally known as "rush hour" - the highway can become highly congested. These conditions often don't materialize gradually, either, as due to an accident, traveling may come to a grinding halt.

For this reason, it's important to increase one's traveling distance to ensure that there's plenty of time to come to a stop relatively quickly.

Naturally, traffic jams can occur on country roads as well, but they traditionally don't lead to as many accidents, largely because fewer people travel on them. However, what they lack in volume they make up for in pedestrians, as they can often be lined with bicyclists, walkers and runners.

Pedestrian safety more of an issue in country

When traveling on country roads, keep an eye out for the breakdown lane and provide plenty of room for the pedestrian. If they're following the rules of the road, runners and walkers should be walking toward traffic, while bicyclists ride with traffic. Either way, motorists ought to keep people who are traveling through alternative means in mind as they travel the country.

While conditions for both the highway and country carry a certain level of risk for being involved in an accident, it may come as a surprise that back roads are the places in which car accidents happen the most frequently. According to insurance industry data, accidents most frequently take place within 25 miles of a driver's home, largely because they let their guards down when in proximity to their residence.

Overall, however, traffic accidents have dropped significantly - both on the highway and in the country. According to Transport Canada, there were more than 170,600 collisions that resulted in a person's injury in 1991. That total dropped to 123,141 by 2010.

The lowered rate of accidents has helped reduce local car insurance rates for policyholders. Similar to driving, however, premium prices are based on a variety of conditions

