

Survey Your Surroundings

SMARTdriving Series



As you move into traffic you are constantly entering new areas and situations, with each one presenting a different picture. Make sure you get the complete picture.

Your traffic picture is the sum total of all conflict that can be perceived. This includes what you can see, but also what you should see!

In the city, your picture should include at least sidewalk-to-sidewalk wide and 15 or more seconds ahead of your vehicle.

To keep your traffic picture, eliminate all barriers that can interfere. First, establish proper following distance. Use the four-second rule. This rule lets you take your eyes off the taillights of the vehicle ahead so you can check traffic yourself. Conflicts up ahead and from right and left need your decision -- not that of the driver of the vehicle ahead or someone else. Second, when traffic density challenges proper following distance, speed must be reduced and attention sharpened for trouble tip-offs. Concentrate only on driving. Distractions can steal part of your entire traffic picture. Turning your head in conversation with a passenger, tuning the radio or reaching for something on the seat can be risky. A lapse in attention while talking on a cell phone can be fatal. Even a brief moment of inattention can trap you when the picture changes by a split-second move, stop or conflict ahead.

Objectives for Surveying Your Surroundings:

- Avoid being boxed in when lanes ahead are blocked.
- Avoid severe braking and abrupt turns.
- Adjust speed when approaching intersections on stale green traffic signal.
- Correctly anticipate moves of other drivers and pedestrians and avoid conflict.
- Slow down before entering "no control" intersections or where there is a possibility of conflict.

For additional information, visit <http://itd.idaho.gov/dmv/>

