

Transportation Safety

Training ADVISOR

December 2024

Night driving

Illuminate your road to safety

The conversation continues:
Marijuana rescheduling

California eases 90-day inspection
requirement for select vehicles

Information and resources to help your drivers operate safely



J. J. Keller
& Associates, Inc.
Since 1953

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MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

Little changes can make a big difference

Night driving brings with it the dangers of weakened depth perception, peripheral vision, and color perception. Many drivers struggle with blinding headlights from oncoming traffic, and rainy weather at night can make it hard to see signs and lane markings.



To help make night driving a little easier on the eyes, drivers can:

Dim their dashboards

The bright dashboard lights can cause a major distraction from the road, but dimming them can help fix that problem.

Clean the vehicle's windows and mirrors

The dirt and debris that build up over time are more noticeable at night because of the glare from outside lights, which makes everything harder to see. Also have drivers check their headlights for build-up to make sure they're clean and providing the most illumination possible.

Avoid looking at headlights

To avoid feeling blinded, drivers should focus their eyes on the white line on the right side of the road when oncoming headlights are coming toward them. It takes time for the eyes to adjust back to the dark after staring into bright lights, which can cause temporary vision issues.

Slow down

It's always helpful to slow down in the face of any impairment. If drivers struggle to see well in the dark, they should slow their speed and increase their following distance. ♦



Lucero Truskowski

Lucero Truskowski joined J. J. Keller & Associates, Inc. as an Associate Editor in 2022. Lucero edits, writes, and researches content on a variety of topics, including transportation, human resources, and driver training. She holds a Master of Science (MS) in Professional Writing from New York University.



TRAINING BLUEPRINT — NIGHT DRIVING

Stay bright and drive right

Driving at night presents a number of challenges for professional drivers. Drivers who work the overnight hours trade the daytime risks that come with overcrowded, congested roads full of people with the evening hazards of reduced visibility, impaired drivers on the road, and fatigue.

TIP: A video can be a helpful way to introduce this topic. When selecting a video, consider the types of vehicles your drivers operate and the challenges and situations they face.

Lights on, hazards off

Headlights are your drivers' most effective tool in the dark. Headlights should be clean and in proper adjustment. Dirty or poorly adjusted headlights can cut illumination by as much as half.



In good weather, low beam headlights allow a driver to see about 250 feet ahead and high beam headlights allow 350-500 feet of visibility. The vehicle's speed may need to be adjusted to ensure the driver can stop within that visible distance.

High beam headlights should only be used when it's safe and legal to do so. High beams should be dimmed within 500-1000 feet of an oncoming vehicle, or within 500 feet of a vehicle being followed.

Roadway perils

Some of the roadway hazards drivers face at night include:

- **Poor visibility.** At night, hazards aren't as easy to see and may not be recognized as quickly as they are during the day. In rural areas, drivers must depend on the vehicle's headlights for lighting. In urban areas, lighting levels can vary, requiring the driver's eyes to adjust. Slowing down and increasing the following distance can help accommodate lower visibility.
- **Unfamiliar roads.** Although drivers should use caution on all roads when driving at night, they

should slow down and use extra caution on unfamiliar roads to allow enough stopping distance.

- **Impaired drivers.** Impaired drivers are a hazard to everyone on the road. Drivers should use extra caution around closing time for bars and keep an eye out for vehicles that:
 - Weave from lane to lane,
 - Stop without reason,
 - Have trouble maintaining a constant speed, or
 - Show other signs of impaired or erratic driving.
- **Other road users.** In many cases, darkness impairs a driver's view of other road users, including those who jog, walk, or bike along the side of the road.

Drivers should pay special attention while driving on roadways lined by woods and/or tall grass. Deer, raccoons, and other animals often move at night and can dart into the road.

TIP: Stress to your drivers the importance of visual scanning and defensive driving.

Personal (and vehicle) preparation

Proper preparation before driving at night can go a long way when it comes to safety.

Route planning involves mapping out two or three safe locations for each rest or refueling stop before starting the trip. The driver should know where to exit or enter a roadway and where construction zones are located.

Vehicle preparedness means completing a full pretrip inspection and paying extra attention to the lights, reflectors, and windshield. Each of these elements should be cleaned and replaced as needed.

Fatigue management means knowing that the effects of fatigue are magnified by darkness and taking steps to prevent them. Effects like yawning, drowsiness, and lane deviation can be prevented with:

- Getting consistent rest each night,
- Regularly eating nutritious meals,
- Exercising regularly, and
- Napping when needed. ♦

TIP: If your company has a policy on driver fatigue, distribute and review this information as a helpful refresher.



TRAINING HANDOUT — NIGHT DRIVING

Illuminate your road to safety

To avoid the dangers of night driving:

- Turn on your headlights just before sunset
- Always drive within the range of your headlights
- Never look directly into the headlights of oncoming vehicles
- Dim high beam headlights when within 500-1000 feet of another vehicle
- Signal all stops, slowdowns, lane changes, and turns a little earlier than you would during the day
- Increase following distance
- Never stare at a single point ahead
- Continually scan the roadway
- Use extra caution on curves and hills
- Watch for animals, impaired or distracted drivers, and other road users ♦



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TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE — NIGHT DRIVING

1. Driving at night means trading one set of roadway hazards with another.
 - A. True
 - B. False

2. High beam headlights should be dimmed within _____ feet of an oncoming vehicle.
 - A. 250-350
 - B. 350-500
 - C. 500-1000
 - D. 100-150

3. You should turn your headlights on after the sun sets.
 - A. True
 - B. False

4. When driving at night, you should:
 - A. Fight through fatigue to stay on schedule
 - B. Always use your high beams to increase visibility
 - C. Drive faster since there are fewer cars on the road
 - D. Continually scan the road

5. When driving at night, you should increase your following distance.
 - A. True
 - B. False ♦

NAME: _____ DATE: _____

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The conversation continues: Marijuana rescheduling

The Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) is hosting a public hearing to further discuss a proposal to reclassify marijuana as a less dangerous drug.

The event is scheduled for December 2, 2024, at 9:00 a.m. EST in Arlington, VA. Participants will discuss a proposed rule change from May 21 that would reclassify marijuana from a Schedule I drug to a Schedule III drug.

What's the impact?

Under the Controlled Substances Act, Schedule I drugs have no approved medical use, have a high potential for abuse, and cannot be prescribed legally. Schedule III drugs, in contrast:

- Have accepted medical uses,
- Can be prescribed legally, and
- Have a low to moderate potential for physical and psychological dependence.

If the rescheduling is finalized:

- The applicable Schedule III regulatory controls would apply to marijuana. In part, this means individuals who use marijuana illegally would be subject to lesser penalties than if it were a Schedule I drug.
- Marijuana would remain subject to applicable provisions of the Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act, under which marijuana would need Food & Drug Administration approval to be lawfully “introduce[d] or deliver[ed] for introduction into interstate commerce.”



According to testimony earlier this year from DOT Secretary Pete Buttigieg, the rescheduling would not affect DOT regulations because Congress specifically required the agency to regulate the use of cannabis by name, not by DEA schedule. ♦



Key to remember: A public hearing in December will further the discussion about reclassifying marijuana as a less dangerous drug. How such a reclassification would affect DOT drug testing programs and marijuana transportation remains to be seen.

California eases 90-day inspection requirement for select vehicles

As of January 1, 2025, certain vehicles will no longer be subject to California's 90-day inspection program.

Recently enacted Assembly Bill 3278 removes vehicles with a gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR) of under 26,001 lbs from the state's mandatory 90-day vehicle inspection program (sometimes referred to as the California Highway Patrol's 90-day BIT inspection).

About the 90-day inspection program

Section 34505.5 of the California Vehicle Code requires a vehicle inspection at least every 90 days on the following items:

- Brake adjustments,
- Brake system components and leaks,

- Steering and suspension systems,
- Tires and wheels, and
- Vehicle connecting devices.

Inspections must be documented and include the:

- Identification of the vehicle, including:
 - Make,
 - Model,
 - License number,
 - Company vehicle number, or
 - Other means of positive identification;
- Date and nature of each inspection and any repair performed; and

- A signature of the carrier's authorized representative attesting to the inspection and the completion of all required repairs.

Inspection records must be maintained for two years.

The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) considers this mandatory inspection program to be equivalent to the federal inspection requirements in Part 396.

Periodic inspection compliance on January 1

On and after January 1, 2025, vehicles that are no longer subject to the 90-day inspection requirement will be subject to the federal annual inspection requirements in Part 396 of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations (FMCSRs). ♦



Next Month's Topic: Personal safety

Thousands of drivers are injured and millions of dollars are lost each year in theft and robberies. The key to staying safe is to recognize and avoid potentially harmful situations before they happen. A well thought out trip and a keen sense of awareness can go a long way in preventing these potentially harmful situations. ♦



Expert Help: Question of the Month

Question:

Are there any regulations providing guidance on what colors are allowed for truck accent lighting? One of our drivers was pulled over last week and given a citation due to the truck having blue accent lights. No regulation number was referenced on the citation.



Answer: Unfortunately, there's a mix of state and federal rules at play. Prohibitions against blue lights are found in state traffic codes, not the federal rules. For example, here's the Wisconsin regulation:

347.25(4) No vehicle may be equipped with or display any blue colored light or lamp unless the vehicle is used in police work authorized by the state or a political subdivision of the state or is used by a fire department as authorized under sub. (1s).

This is just one example, but our understanding is that many states restrict blue lights in particular because blue is typically reserved for emergency vehicles.

To play it safe, it might be best to avoid blue accent lights altogether. ♦

Expert Help

Your print publication gives you access to our Expert Help feature. Get answers to your toughest compliance questions from our team of experts, within one business day. Email us, privately and securely, at: asktheexpertprint@jjkeller.com.



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