

School of Rural Health

Information Sheet for Driving on Country Roads

The information contained below brings awareness of risks involved for travelling in rural areas. We ask that you read the following information, drive according to the prevailing conditions and take your responsibilities seriously when driving to your allocated rural placement in order to ensure your safety.

Awareness & Driver Responsibility

- Drive within the speed limit at all times and reduce speed for factors such as road surface, poor light, poor visibility i.e. fog, wet conditions, black ice etc. Not all country roads are sealed, so you will need to slow down if you encounter an unsealed (gravel surface) road.
- Be aware of your fatigue levels. Look for the signs telling you that you need to take a break. A ten or fifteen minute break every two hours is recommended.
- Do not, under any circumstances, handle any mobile device while driving on country roads. If you need to receive or make a phone call and do not have 'hands-free' in your car, pull over to the side of the road.
- Remember to allow extra time for travel to and from appointments. However, if you are running late it is better to be late than to speed and risk an accident and injury.
- Not all railway crossings in rural and regional Victoria have red flashing lights or boom-gates, so take extra care when approaching railway crossings on country roads.

Wildlife

- Pay particular attention to the road for wildlife and birds when travelling on country roads. Wildlife are more active at dawn and dusk. If travelling with others, ask the passenger/s to also assist in looking out for wildlife. If a collision is imminent, slow down as much as safely possible and do not swerve to avoid the animal or bird.

Vehicle Maintenance

- Ensure your motor vehicle is roadworthy and well maintained. Your vehicle should be checked before use such as the oil, water and fuel, spare tyre (inflated), car manual and tyre changing equipment. Check that the windscreen is clean and the windscreen wipers are not worn. Also check that all lights are working properly. Your vehicle should also contain a first aid kit (a fire extinguisher is also recommended).

Weather

- Some areas such as the Calder Freeway and the alpine areas of East Gippsland are subject to 'black ice'. This is sometimes referred to as 'glare ice' or 'clear ice' and refers to a thin coating of glazed ice on the road surface. The ice is virtually invisible to drivers. Follow safety advice posted along the roadside.

- Listen to local weather reports. Flash-flooding can occur very quickly and reach hazardous depths on some sections of road without any warning. Do not drive through any flooded road or area.

Further Reading

Monash University, School of Rural Health takes risks associated with driving very seriously. Further driver safety information can be found at:

<http://www.tac.vic.gov.au/road-safety/safe-driving/tips-and-tools>

<http://www.roadsafety.vic.gov.au/road-users/country-road-users.html>

<http://www.roadsafety.vic.gov.au/key-issues/fatigue.html>

Please also refer to the School of Rural Health, **Emergency Response Plans** which provide information and guidance for students on clinical placement for emergencies such as: Code Red (catastrophic) fire danger ratings; Pre-Declared Code Red days; and, Storm / Flood / Earthquake & Other Emergencies.

The SRH Emergency Response Plans can be found <http://www.med.monash.edu.au/srh/student-policies.html>.

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Laura Major

Manager, Rural Health Education Program

School of Rural Health

T: 9905 1521

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Contact: Laura Major & Melissa McNicol	Page 2 of 2