

SafeDriver Monthly Newsletter

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Spring Break

It's that time of year again and the warm beaches of Florida are going to be prime destinations for spring breakers. Spring break is a lot of fun and can provide a lifetime of memories but it can also, just as easily, turn tragic. If you're headed to the coast, remember these safety tips for a safe spring break.

- **Maintain a buddy system** – Travel with friends and stay with those friends to keep each other out of trouble. Along with college students, spring break also attracts unsavory types such as thieves and sexual predators. Don't go off alone with someone you don't know.



There are a lot of reasons not to drink but, if you feel you must:

- **Have a plan** – Plan on how you'll get home safely, either by rideshare or a designated driver. Plan to limit your drinking. If you make a plan before you go out, chances are, you'll stick with that plan but if you wait until after you've been drinking to decide what to do, your judgment will be clouded and you could drink yourself into trouble.
- **Limit your drinking** – While the effect of alcohol is different on everyone, a general rule of thumb is that it requires at least one hour for the body to process the alcohol from one drink. The more you drink, the longer it takes for the body to process the alcohol and get it out of your system. For females, who are generally smaller, one drink can affect you much more quickly than it will for a male and can take longer for the body to process.
- **Binge drinking is deadly** – Your body can only process so much alcohol before it becomes toxic. Alcohol affects your motor skills. You quickly start to feel the effect on the voluntary motor skills that control your speech, vision and ability to walk but too much alcohol can shut down the involuntary muscles controlling the heart and lungs and death from alcohol poisoning is the result. Drinking games look like fun but, for your own safety, make a plan before you go out not engage in any games that could lead to alcohol poisoning.
- **Know what you're drinking** – Different drinks have different amounts of alcohol. Some sweet, flavorful cocktails can have up to four shots of liquor. Depending on your body size, a single cocktail can immediately put you over the legal limit.
- **Females; guard your drinks** – A female who leaves her drink unattended can easily become the victim of a sexual predator who has slipped Rohypnol (the date rape drug) into her drink. If you leave your drink unguarded at any time, dump it and get a fresh drink.
- **Alcohol and the sun don't mix** – If you only drink alcoholic drinks when you're out in the sun, you can easily become dehydrated. The combination of the sun and activities can quickly wear you out and alcohol will compound that effect. Switch off with water or fruit drinks.
- **If it seems like a crazy stunt, it's probably too dangerous** – After drinking, spring breakers have died trying to show off by balancing on bannisters, doing pull ups off of hotel balconies, or trying to dive from a balcony into the hotel pool. Unfortunately, instead of stopping them, their friends, also under the influence of alcohol, urged them on. If you see someone trying to pull a dangerous stunt, try to stop them or call local security. You could save their life.
- **Scooters and mopeds** – If you rent a scooter or moped, make sure you're familiar with its operation and watch out for other drivers on the road who may not be watching out for you. Never try to operate a scooter or moped if you've been drinking.
- **Don't party to the end** – Don't try to party up to the last second before leaving for home. If you're driving, everyone in your party should try to get a good night's sleep before heading home. Driving drowsy is just as dangerous as drunk driving.

- **Stay alert driving on the road** – Share driving duties and switch off with other drivers to remain alert. Long periods on a boring interstate can lead to “highway hypnosis”; avoid that by stopping every two hours or 100 miles to refresh yourself or take a short nap. If you have a long way to drive, don’t try to do it in a single trip. Stop and get some rest before continuing.
- **DON’T DRIVE DRUNK OR DRUGGED!!!!** – It should go without saying but there are far too many tragedies on spring break because people ignored this simple piece of advice!

Anti-lock Brakes

There are two types of brake systems on cars and trucks and in an emergency, knowing what type of braking system you have and how it operates is critical to your safety. Let’s discuss the two types of systems and how to use them properly.

Standard brakes are the old-fashioned type of brakes and they have a simple operation. When you step on the brake pedal, brake fluid is sent under pressure to activate the brakes by pressing the brake pads against the wheel and using friction to stop the vehicle.



In an emergency or on rain-slicked or icy roads, slamming on the brakes can lock up your brakes, effectively taking control of the car away from you. Once the brakes lock up, you can’t steer and you’re basically along for the ride at that point. That’s why drivers are taught

to pump the brakes in slippery road conditions. Pumping the brakes gives you more control but it takes longer to stop the car.

Anti-lock brakes or **ABS**, under normal conditions, operate pretty much like standard brakes but, in an emergency, a computer takes over and basically pumps the brakes for you up to 100 times per second. The computer senses which tires are locking up and skidding and briefly releases pressure and then applies pressure once again. That way, each wheel works independently to prevent the car from skidding while allowing the driver to steer out of danger.

With ABS, you never want to pump the brakes because, if you do, you're telling the ABS computer that you no longer need its help and it stops operating. With ABS you want to apply steady pressure on the brake pedal. When the ABS system is operating, due to the very rapid application and release of the brakes in each wheel, the driver will feel a fluttering sensation in the brake pedal. That's the normal operation and drivers should learn to expect the flutter and not release pressure when they do.

If you're not sure about which brake system you have in your vehicle, check your owner's manual or check with your dealer's service department. Another way to check is that, if you have anti-lock brakes, the ABS light on your dashboard will illuminate when you first turn on the car.

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