

Rural road driving has some of the same - but also different - hazards than city driving. Even though more crashes occur in city driving, rural road crashes cause more injuries and deaths due to the higher speed. Remember that the faster you go, the farther down the road you need to be looking and scanning for hazards or things that will affect your driving. Don't let down your guard just because you are in the rural area.

Road Size – Most rural roads will be narrow and not well maintained. Rural roads will also have trees and other objects close to the side of the roadway.



Rural roads normally do not have curb and gutter areas or sidewalks. Not all rural roads will have center lane lines. Watch for pedestrians and bikes.

Some rural roads may have “hidden driveways” that are difficult to see because of the trees and brush alongside the roadway. Look for mailboxes or fire number signs to help identify where driveways are.

Be on the lookout for vehicles exiting or entering rural road driveways. If you see a vehicle waiting to exit a rural road driveway, slow down and get eye contact to be sure the other driver sees you. If the other driver is not looking in your direction, give a polite tap of the horn to get their attention.

Rural Road Hazards – there are many types of hazards you will need to be on the lookout for when driving on rural roads.



Object Markers – are placed by objects next to the roadway to make you aware of that object. They are placed by things like bridges.

The slants on the signs tell you which side of the object to drive on. The slants will slant downward toward the driving side.



Mailboxes – Take notice where mailboxes are and if there are any people walking to or from them. Most people get hit returning from the mailbox due to their attention being given to the mail and not traffic. Also be on the lookout for the mail carrier. They will be going slowly along the edge of the roadway. When they pull to or away from the mailbox, they may also throw up dirt and rocks from their tires.

Seeing that most rural roads do not have sidewalks, you will need to be alert for people on the edge of the roadway. WI law requires people walking on the roadway to walk against the traffic flow. This means they should walk facing traffic so that they can see when a car is approaching and have time to deal with the vehicle. Slow down as you approach and give the person room as you pass them. Remember to check for oncoming traffic before you pass the person on the roadway.



Underpasses – At times you will have to drive under a bridge. Check to make sure you have enough room to make it under. Also look atop the bridge to see if anything is falling or hanging down.

Also watch for side roads or driveways that may be just on the other side of the underpass.

Different Types of Vehicles – You will encounter different types of vehicles on rural roads than in city traffic. Rural roads will have more farm equipment, animal drawn vehicles, snowmobiles, and ATVs. These types of vehicles are normally going slower than you.



Be extra alert for milk tanker trucks pulling in or out of farm driveways. The milk tanker will go slow and need more space to turn. They will need more time to get up to speed once on the roadway. Watch for them slowing to pull into a driveway.



Garbage and recycling trucks will move slow and stop partially in the driving lane to pick up. Remember that the drivers of these vehicles are normally on the right side making it difficult to see vehicles on their left. Use caution when approaching and passing.



Slow Moving Vehicle Sign – will be found on farm equipment, animal drawn vehicles, construction equipment, or other vehicles that may be going slower than normal traffic. This sign means that the vehicle it is on is going 25 mph or less on WI roadways.

Animals – You have a greater chance of encountering an animal on the roadway on rural roads than in the city. The types of animals on rural roads will also be different than city streets. In the city you will deal with animals such as dogs, cats, birds, and those pesky squirrels. Rural roads will have deer, skunk, raccoon, turkey, bear, horse, and even cows. These animals have larger mass which will do more damage to your vehicle if hit at high speeds. Whenever driving in an area that might have animals, slow down slightly and be alert for them. If you have passengers in your vehicle, have them help watch for the animals.

When you do encounter an animal on the roadway, slow down and stop safely if possible. Stay calm and wait for the animal to move on. Avoid getting out of the vehicle to “shoo” the animal away. It may attack.



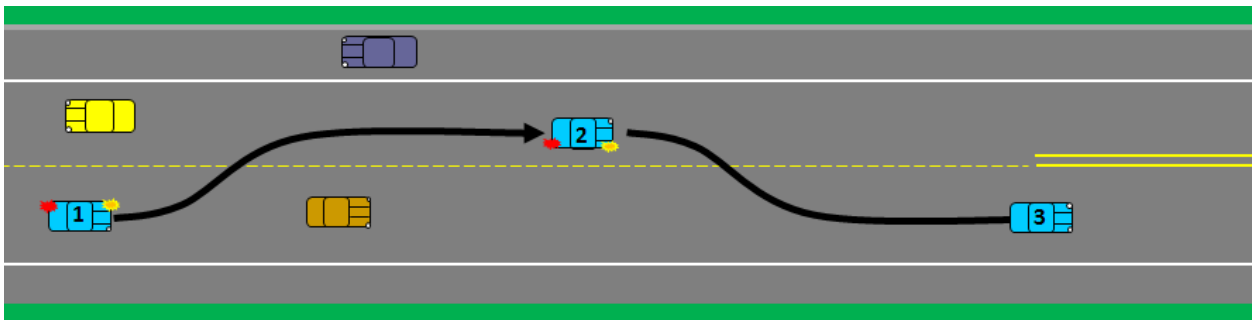
Manure on roadways can create a very dangerous driving surface. Be especially careful when it is wet manure. If you are driving by farm fields and notice that the roadway looks like it has dirt on it, slow down and watch for other traffic sliding around.



Wet leaves on the roadway can also create a dangerous driving surface. You may think that they are only leaves, but think again. Those wet leaves have just made the driving surface slippery. And the more wet leaves there are, the slipperier the roadway will be. Slow down and take it easy when driving on roadways with leaves on. Also watch for other traffic sliding on the leaves.

Passing

Passing other vehicles can be dangerous if you do not plan and time the pass correctly. Passing should only be done if it is necessary and legal. Don't pass just to get ahead of the driver in front of you, and don't pass if your visibility is poor.



After you are sure it is safe and legal to pass, you should:

Step 1 – Get your left turn signal on to alert others that you are going to pass. Speed up to a safe speed but do not go over the posted speed limit. Going over the speed limit to pass is illegal and could result in a speeding ticket. Make a lane change to the left into the oncoming traffic lane while keeping an eye on the vehicle you are passing to make sure they do not start moving into the same lane. Also make sure you are watching for vehicles approaching in the lane you are in.

Step 2 – Once you are safely pass the vehicle a have a safe space cushion between the two of you, get your right signal on and lane change back to the right.

Step 3 – Once back in the driving lane, check your mirrors for traffic around you and adjust you speed and spacing to road, traffic, and weather conditions.