

Lane selection on the freeway

Left Lane

- Many states prohibit driving in the left lane unless you are passing.
- Vehicles typically travel at a higher speed, allowing less time to react and making crashes more severe.
- Watch out for narrow shoulders, guardrails or barriers to the left, which limit escape options when trying to avoid a collision.
- Generally, merging traffic only coming from one side, lessening conflicts with other vehicles.
- May be the safest lane to travel in when traveling through congested areas where there is a lot of merging onto and off of the freeway; and traffic is moving within the speed limit.

Middle Lanes

- Vehicles can merge into this lane from either side. Sometimes multiple vehicles attempt to do so at the same time; requiring constant monitoring.
- There are no shoulders, so taking evasive action requires moving into a live lane of travel, which is more dangerous. Therefore, it is important to not travel with vehicles to either side when in the middle lane.

The safest lane to travel in is situational.
Know the ins and outs of traveling in each lane.

Right Lane

- Typically slower, but not necessarily safer. Vehicles in right lanes typically encounter more conflict due to other vehicles merging on and off the highway. This requires more awareness, speed changes, and a continual adjusting of following distance.
- Right lanes typically have the best escape routes with large shoulders, and if needed, the ability to move to the middle lane if open.
- The right lane may not be the best lane when traveling through metropolitan areas with a lot of on and off ramps; unless you plan to exit.

Move Over Laws

- Know the rules in your state for moving over when emergency vehicles are stopped on the shoulder or roadway.
- "Emergency vehicles" typically encompasses law enforcement, firefighters, emergency responders, tow trucks and in some states, utility or maintenance vehicles.
- These laws require moving over, if safe to do so, to allow a full lane of traffic between your vehicle and emergency vehicles.
- If it is not safe to move over, or if only one lane of travel exists, vehicles are required to slow to a safe speed. Some states stipulate a 20 to 25 mph speed reduction.

Avoid the Pack: Avoid driving in a pack of vehicles on the highway. Adjust your speed to move ahead or drop behind the pack. When vehicles are bunched up on the highway the risk of collisions increases, and the ability to take evasive action is limited. Sometimes the pack can't be avoided when traffic is heavy. In these situations, stay focused, increase your following distance, and travel in a lane with a shoulder to provide a safe out if necessary.