The Dangerous Mile

We sometimes hear drivers talking about a "dangerous mile" on the roads they travel. This may be an area where there is a blind curve, a steep hill, an uncontrolled intersection or heavy, high-speed traffic. These sections might have a history of frequent accidents or a few highly memorable accidents.

It is important to be aware of the particular hazards of any stretch of road. However, the most critical mile is always the mile right in front of you. That is the mile which needs your undivided attention and your very best driving skills to travel safely.

Here’s how to survive that next mile:

- Drive defensively. You must drive to prevent collisions in spite of incorrect actions of others and in spite of adverse conditions. These adverse conditions include light, weather, road, traffic, vehicle problems and driver difficulties.
- Wear your seat belt and shoulder harness. These safety devices have been proven to reduce injuries and fatalities in a motor vehicle crash.
- Become thoroughly familiar with all the operating controls on a vehicle before starting out. A poor time to be looking for your vehicle’s horn is when a truck is barreling down on you. Also adjust the seat and mirrors before setting a vehicle in motion.
- Observe speed limits. Believe your speedometer rather than your senses to reduce your speed for curves.
- Get in the habit of reading all road warning signs. That way, you won’t be surprised by curves and traffic lights that seem to appear out of nowhere; chances are there was a sign that told you it was coming up.
- Plan your route with the help of your global positioning system or a map. This will help you avoid last-minute exits

from the freeway and U-turns in city traffic.

- Get the big picture. Watch for traffic in front of you, behind you and on both sides. Watch for potential hazards such as car doors that could open and children or pets who could run into the street. Stay alert for vehicles that might fail to stop at stoplights or possibly veer into your lane.

Keep your mind on your driving and the traffic around you. The most important mile is the one right in front of you, so give it your full attention whenever you drive.