

Stock up on vehicle breakdown supplies



Unforeseen situations can crop up at any time. Anyone who has had a roadside breakdown in their car understands this. A flat tire or an engine malfunction is something no driver wants to experience, but those with a well-stocked vehicle emergency kit and breakdown strategy can get through most situations rather easily.

A 2017 survey from AAA found that 40 percent of drivers in the United States are not ready to handle a typical roadside emergency breakdown. The organization estimates it helps some seven million motorists get back on the road each summer. A well-equipped roadside emergency kit may help drivers get their vehicles back on the road on their own.

- **First aid kit:** The first aid kit will celebrate its 133rd birthday in 2021. The Johnson & Johnson company began commercializing first aid kits in 1888. Having a first aid kit in the car to treat minor injuries can be helpful in the event of an accident or even after injuring oneself during a breakdown.
- **Fire extinguisher:** Cars are full of various mechanical parts and are susceptible to catching on fire. The National Fire Protection Association says vehicle fire extinguishers need to be rated for Class B and C fires.
- **Jumper cables:** A weak or dead battery is often the culprit in breakdowns. Jumper cables enable drivers to get a charge from another motorist, and may help get a person back on the road quickly. If possible, get a set of cables that also comes with safety gloves

and heavy duty clamps, offers Defensive Driving Online, a defensive driving course.

- **Mobile phone/charger:** A mobile phone is essential for calling for assistance, but the phone is only useful if it's charged.
- **Blanket:** Keep a blanket in the trunk or another storage area. Should the vehicle die in cold weather, that blanket can help keep passengers warm until assistance arrives.
- **Basic tools:** Tools like a screwdriver, ratchet set and wrench may enable drivers to complete minor repairs. Tools also should include tire-changing gear, such as a jack and lug nut remover.
- **Traction aid:** Non-clumping kitty litter or sand can provide the traction needed to get off of a slippery area of roadway.
- **Flashlight:** A flashlight can help keep you visible and able to see your surroundings in dark conditions.
- **Flares:** Should a breakdown occur in the dark, flares can alert other drivers.
- **Snacks and water:** Water and food that stores well, such as emergency rations, granola bars or trail mix, can quell hunger pangs and provide an energy boost while waiting for help.
- **Rope/bungee cords/tarp:** These items can be used in various situations to secure a vehicle.

While drivers can gather these items separately, many companies offer all-in-one vehicle emergency kits. A safety kit is essential for all drivers.

Safety tips for novice motorcycle riders



Millions of motorists traverse the country's roadways when the weather allows. An increasing number of those motorists are seeing the sights while riding motorcycles.

Riding a motorcycle can be an awe-inspiring experience much different from riding inside a car or truck. According to the motorcycle information resource Biker Report, 1.5 million Americans owned a motorcycle in 2018. Even though motorcycle accidents have declined in recent years, a recent report by the Governors Highway Safety Association, a nonprofit organization representing state highway safety offices, indicates that, when adjusting for miles traveled, motorcycle fatalities occur 28 times more frequently than fatalities involving passenger vehicles. Alcohol and drug impairment, distraction and an aging motorcycle population have contributed to the elevated accident risk among motorcycle riders. However, inexperience also plays a role.

By adhering to certain safety measures, novice riders can avoid various risks and stay safe as they get more acclimated to their motorcycles.

- **Get your license.** It is essential to ride with a license. In the United States, riders are required to have a motorcycle license or endorsement in addition to a driver's license to legally ride a motorcycle. Depending on where riders live, a motorcycle safety course may be a prerequisite to getting a license and can help riders improve their skills on a motorcycle.
- **Enroll in a safety course.** A safety course can teach riders various strategies, including emergency evasive maneuvers. The Motorcycle Safety Foundation offers

courses for riders, who can check to see if any such courses are available in their areas.

- **Wear a helmet.** Many states require motorcycle operators and riders to wear helmets when bikes are in operation. Helmets are required by law in Canada across all provinces and territories. The U.S. Department of Transportation also recommends a full-face helmet as an added safety option for novice motorcycle riders. Biker Report states that a helmet can reduce risks of brain injuries from a motorcycle accident by up to 67 percent.

- **Wear protective clothing.** In addition to helmets, jackets and other protective gear can reduce the risk of injury for riders involved in crashes. A 2011 study published in the journal Accident Analysis and Prevention determined there was a significantly reduced risk of injury to the upper body when riders wore fitted body armor.

- **Practice in a closed environment.** It is essential that motorcycle riders grow accustomed to riding the bike they will be taking out on the road. Doing so in a parking lot or a closed course enables riders to get a better feel for the throttle grip and brakes and steering. Riders can gradually increase their time on the motorcycle and skip long distance trips until they feel comfortable on their bikes.

In addition to these tips, novice riders are urged to be as visible as possible while on the road. Bright or reflective items can make motorcycle riders stand out. With these safety measures in place, novice motorcycle riders can reduce their risk for accidents and injuries while on the road.