

SharpDrive Online Fleet Driver Training Discuss Emergency Stopping

An emergency stop should never be necessary, but if it is it should be a good one, and it's harder than you think to do a good emergency stop. Most importantly, get your foot off the accelerator and onto the brake as quickly and directly as you can. Not a big stomp, but hard enough to activate the ABS immediately. Mats, clutter or the wrong footwear will get in the way. High heels, thongs and sandals are not suitable for driving.

With ABS brakes don't ever ease and squeeze the pedal – just keep pressing. Feeling the pedal vibrate or pulse is normal . Now for some ABS facts and myths. ABS doesn't always stop you shorter. In loose gravel, snow and ice conditions ABS brakes take a lot further to stop. Some vehicles have a 'snow mode' for this.

To be in control, the wheels must keep rotating while braking. Skidding with locked brakes takes longer to stop. The ABS eliminates brake lockup. ABS easily handles unequal surfaces, as each wheel is braked individually. It makes doing an evasive stop that takes you onto a gravel shoulder much safer. You should be able to steer until you've stopped. Without ABS you would spin back onto the roadway when the wheels hit gravel.

ABS does not prevent tail out slides, and oversteer. It can, however, prevent front wheel skids, meaning it is possible to steer while braking in an emergency. With locked brakes a vehicle does not respond to steering; it just pushes straight ahead. If you have never experienced an ABS stop before, practice in a safe area at no more than 50 kilometers an hour.

However, your safety should not depend on your emergency stopping skills. Creating a safety zone for yourself will eliminate the need for emergency stops. Use the two second rule to set a safe following distance. When you observe the vehicle ahead pass a road marking or post on the side, count 1001, 1002. If you have finished counting before you reach the same spot, your're okay. If you haven't finished counting before you reach the same spot, you're too close. Drop back. Then if the driver ahead of you stops suddenly you have a safety zone.

Two seconds is the minimum safe following distance. Test your two second count on a stopwatch. Watch for tailgaters following too close behind that could hit you. The driver behind still needs a two second reaction distance, so just add their two seconds to yours, increasing your gap to four seconds.

Do the same when cars in front are tailgating. If they collide, they stop very suddenly. For any adverse weather or adverse road conditions add another two seconds safety margin, making at least four seconds following distance. Also allow extra if your vehicle is heavily loaded or you are towing a trailer. Using these distance rules you will save on brakes, tyres, fuel and crashes so, as they say, "Only a fool breaks the two second rule."

For more information on fleet safety, driver training websites and driver training programmes please go to <http://www.sharpdrive.co.nz> .

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