NIOSH FAST FACTS

Home Healthcare Workers

How to Prevent Car Accidents

Driving from client to client, home healthcare workers are at high risk for car accidents that could result in injury or death. Distracted driving, aggressive driving, lack of seatbelt use, driving while tired or after having used alcohol or drugs, poor weather conditions, and poorly maintained vehicles can all contribute to car accidents.

EMPLOYERS SHOULD

- Set and enforce mandatory seat belt use policies.
- Ensure that no worker is assigned to drive on the job if he or she does not have a valid driver's license. The license should be appropriate for the type of vehicle to be driven.
- Choose fleet vehicles that offer the highest possible levels of occupant protection in the event of a crash.
- Maintain complete and accurate records of workers' driving performance. In addition to driver's license checks for prospective employees, periodic rechecks after hiring are critical.
- Incorporate training on fatigue management and the dangers of distracted driving into safety programs.
- Ensure that workers receive the training necessary to operate specialized motor vehicles.
- Consider providing an emergency car kit containing a flashlight, extra batteries, flares, a blanket, and bottled water.

EMPLOYEES SHOULD

- Use seatbelts.
- Stop the car before using a cell phone.
- Avoid distracting activities such as eating, drinking, and adjusting radio and other controls while driving.
- Avoid driving when over-tired.
- Use detailed maps to determine your route before you leave, or use a GPS.
- Have the car checked and serviced regularly.
- Keep the gas tank at least a quarter full.
- Carry an emergency car kit containing a flashlight, extra batteries, flares, a blanket, and bottled water.

If you are driving and there is:

A TORNADO WARNING

- Get out of the vehicle immediately and go to the lowest floor of a nearby building or a storm shelter.

AN EARTHQUAKE

- Stop the vehicle as quickly as possible and stay in the vehicle. Avoid stopping near or under buildings, trees, overpasses, and utility wires.
- Proceed with caution once the earthquake has stopped. Avoid roads, bridges, or ramps that might have been damaged or destroyed by the earthquake.

A BLIZZARD OR ICE STORM

- Drive only if absolutely necessary. If you must drive:
  - Travel during daylight hours.
  - Keep others informed of your schedule.
  - Stay on main roads; avoid backroad shortcuts.
  - Use snow tires or chains when appropriate.
- If a blizzard or ice storm traps you in the vehicle:
  - Turn on hazard lights and hang a distress flag or help sign from the radio antenna or window.
  - Call 911 and your employer if you have a cell phone.
  - Remain in your vehicle. Rescuers are most likely to find you there.
  - Do not set out on foot unless you can see a building close by where you know you can take shelter.

This is one in a series of six fast fact cards developed to provide practical advice for home healthcare workers and is based on *NIOSH Hazard Review: Occupational Hazards in Home Healthcare*, NIOSH Pub No. 2010–125.

Telephone: 1–800–CDC–INFO | **TTY:** 1–888–232–6348
Email: cdcinfo@cdc.gov | **Web:** www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/healthcare

DHHS (NIOSH) Publication No. 2012–122
February 2012

SAFER - HEALTHIER - PEOPLE™

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health