

Loss Control Insights

EMERGENCY REPORTING

A great benefit of cellular mobile telephones is their use in reporting trouble. To warrant mobile phone handling, authorities say that an incident is considered an emergency if it requires immediate action.

Mobile phone numbers for reporting emergencies vary by state, region and city. Motorists should obtain numbers for their localities and keep them at hand for quick calling in event of an emergency.

A motorist who has a cellular phone and happens upon an emergency should be prepared to give specific information to the agency called. Most dispatchers will ask for facts but it is best if motorists have ready the following details:

- Location of the Emergency - road name or number, city, closest cross street or off-ramp, milepost or other identifier, direction of travel, and any distinguishing landmarks
- Nature of the Emergency - crash, reckless or suspected drinking driver, traffic hazard, medical emergency, fire, crime in progress, etc.

In every instance, the dispatcher will ask for the caller's name, mobile phone number, and home and work phone numbers in case more information is needed. **Important:** A caller should stay on the line until the dispatcher says he or she has enough information to be able to send help.

It is almost impossible to provide accurate information and drive safely at the same time. Pull over, turn on your hazard lights (flashers) and stop.

Above all, after reporting an emergency, mobile phone users should never risk their own safety. Calling for trained, professional help is the best approach, although in an immediate life-threatening situation it may be appropriate to take rescue action provided the "rescuer" is not endangered.

What To Do If Your Car Breaks Down on the Highway

You are driving down the highway when suddenly you have car trouble. The National Safety Council suggests the following measures when your car breaks down or has a flat tire on the highway.

At the first sign of car trouble, gently and smoothly take your foot off the accelerator. Do not brake hard or suddenly.

Carefully work your vehicle toward the breakdown lane or the side of the road. If you are on an interstate, try to reach an exit. Signal your intentions to drivers behind you. If it is necessary to change lanes, watch your mirrors and the traffic around you closely.

Once off the road, make your car visible. Put reflectorized triangles behind your vehicle to alert other drivers; use your emergency flashers. If it is dark, turn on the interior dome light.

When you have a flat tire, be certain that you can change it safely without being close to traffic. If that is possible, change the tire as you normally would. Remember, safety must take precedence over your schedule or whatever other concerns you may have.

However, when the car is beyond repair, it is best to get professional help. Do not try to flag down other vehicles. Raise your hood and tie something white to the radio antenna or hang it out a window so police officers or tow truck operators will know help is needed. Don't stand behind or next to your vehicle. If the car is in the roadway, stand away from the vehicle and wait for help to arrive.

Watch for a uniformed police officer or other emergency personnel. All interstate highways and major roads are patrolled regularly. Also, some highways have special "call-for-help" phones.

It is inadvisable to walk on an interstate, especially during inclement weather. However, if you can reach a source of help on foot, without jeopardizing your physical or personal safety, try the direct approach by walking. Keep as far from traffic as possible and walk on the right side of the roadway. Never attempt to cross a multi-lane, high speed roadway.