

# **DRIVING IN A DISASTER**

## **Safety Tips for Motorists in Emergencies**

After almost every disaster, search and rescue teams find victims who might have survived if they had known whether to stay with or leave their cars. Following are safety tips for drivers in various types of emergencies. This information should be kept in the glove compartment of your car. In any situation, the most important rule is: Don't panic.

### **Hurricane...*Evacuate Early***

Flooding can begin well before a hurricane nears land. Plan to evacuate early, and keep a full tank of gas during the hurricane season. Learn the best evacuation route before a storm forms, and make arrangements with friends or relatives inland to stay with them until the storm has passed. Never attempt to drive during a hurricane or until the all clear is given after the storm. Flash flooding can occur after a hurricane has passed. Avoid driving on coastal and low-lying roads. Storm surge and hurricane-caused flooding are erratic and may occur with little or no warning.

### **Flood...*Get Out of the Car***

Never attempt to drive through water on a road. Water can be deeper than it appears, and water levels can rise very quickly. Most cars will float dangerously for at least a short while. A car can be buoyed by floodwaters and then swept downstream during a flood. Floodwaters also can erode roadways, and a missing section of road - even a missing bridge - will not be visible with water running over the area. Wade through floodwaters only if the water is not flowing rapidly and only in water no higher than the knees. If a car stalls in floodwater, get out quickly and move to higher ground. The floodwaters may still be rising, and the car could be swept away at any moment.

### **Tornado...*Get Out of the Car***

A car is the least safe place to be during a tornado. When a warning is issued, do not try to leave the area by car. If you are in a car, leave it and find shelter in a building. If a tornado approaches and there are no safe structures nearby, lie flat in a ditch or other ground depression with your arms over your head.

### **Summer Heat...*Stay Out of a Parked Car***

During hot weather, heat build-up in a closed or nearly closed car can occur quickly and intensely. Children and pets can die from heat stroke in a matter of minutes when left in a closed car. Never leave anyone in a parked car during periods of high summer heat.

Cars should be equipped with supplies, which could be useful in any emergency. Depending on location, climate of the area, personal requirements and other variables, the supplies in the kit might include (but are not limited to) the following:

- blanket/sleeping bag
- booster cables and tools
- bottled water
- canned fruits and nuts and manual can opener
- first aid kit
- flashlight
- rain gear and extra clothes
- necessary medication
- matches and candles
- shovel
- traction mats or chains

Listen to radio or television for the latest National Weather Service bulletins on severe weather for the area in which you will drive. In times of developing emergencies such as toxic material spill or nuclear plant accidents keep a radio or television on and await instructions. If evacuation is recommended, move quickly but calmly, following instructions as to route to be used, evacuation shelter to be sought, and other directions.