

Home Safely for the Holidays

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Please Transplant New Yorkers – Stop Honking

The American Automobile Association (AAA) is projecting that 81.5 million Americans will travel this Thanksgiving week (11/24-11/30/26). The organization forecasts that most of those heading out over the holiday period will travel on the roadways (72.9 million folks) by car. As an amateur advocate for safe driving, I wanted to take this opportunity to encourage everyone to prioritize safety over that arrival time during the holiday week and beyond.

I find, and I know I speak for a collective here, that it is increasingly challenging on our roadways to drive from one place to another, whether a few miles from home or during a longer trip, not to have at least some type of close call or exposure to an unsafe driver. The speed limit has been reduced to 35 MPH on Lithia Inn Road in Lincolnton from 45 MPH. I like this approach in which we essentially say that residential roads that are connecting streets (in this case from Main Street in Boger City to Country Club Road that a lot of us take to go into town or head to the bypass) are still residential areas and not thoroughfares. Local officials (assuming the Lincolnton Police Department) have placed the speed tracking digital display signs on this road to emphasize the new, lower speed limit. Yet, in the short amount of time that the speed limit has been reduced on this road, I've already had two impatient drivers tailgate me

and pass me on double lines. The first incident occurred a few weeks ago when I was driving past the golf course heading to the Tin Mine Road convenience site. Yes, a driver of a large SUV did not apparently like that I was driving 35 MPH, and she flew past me going well over even the old 45 MPH speed limit. Then, this past Saturday morning, I had a gentleman on a motorcycle who was riding my bumper so closely, it felt like he was in my backseat. What I implore to motorcycle riders is that when you get into an accident with a car, even a small vehicle, you are very likely to be seriously harmed or worse. There is nothing to protect you when you are on a motorcycle. I say I prefer those who are impatient to just pass me already, but that is the wrong attitude as well. Everyone needs to relax and drive safely at the speed limit, so together we can create a safe driving environment for our families and children in which conflicts between drivers or accidents are avoided.

We also need to adjust our speeds as speed limits change along roadways. I was driving east toward Highway 16 on Saturday (11/21) before noon on Highway 150 in Lincoln County. As is my practice, I actually slow down to the speed limit of 45 MPH after North Lincoln High School. Well, the gentleman in the truck behind me was not happy and tailgated me intensely until we reached the onramp to Highway 16. To be fair, as I don't want to discriminate against men, I've lately had women in their luxury vehicles in this stretch tailgate me dangerously as well. These are beautiful women. I believe all women are beautiful, but I use this adjective with confidence because I see their faces in great detail as they're tailgating me. I often look in my rearview mirror to find people of all ages on Highway 150 enraged and seemingly confused as to why I'm traveling at the speed that I am, as if speed limit signs are not regularly posted along the highway. Folks, you should never tailgate, but if a vehicle in front of you is traveling at the speed limit, you have no justification legally, ethically and certainly not from a safety standpoint, to be angry. Remember that the driver of any vehicle that is driving safely and at the speed limit or even below in inclement weather is "in the right" and you "are in the wrong" for being impatient and for being a dangerous driver.

A few more concerns I'm experiencing and witnessing lately. I will activate my turn signal to communicate to the driver of the vehicle behind me that I will soon be turning off the road and, therefore, slowing down. Often, the vehicle behind me slows down, but will tailgate me, almost as if it is about to push me off the road. Now, what should we do when a car has brake lights on and a turn signal on, indicating it is about to turn off the road? We should back off and give that vehicle plenty of space so the driver of that vehicle can safely navigate the turn. Aggressively tailgating the turning vehicle in front of us both distracts the driver of the leading car and, of course, is simply unsafe. The other related behavior that I see a lot of lately is what I refer to as "timing the turn." I don't

know how many times I just barely get off the road when a vehicle passes right behind me going full speed. If a driver has to delay making a turn due to some obstruction on the road they are turning onto, this behavior of “timing the turn” of the vehicle in front of us, is simply dangerous driving. Again, even if we think that vehicle will turn and be off the road before we arrive at that spot, we need to slow down and allow plenty of space. Once a turning vehicle in front of us is completely off the road, then we can resume our drive at a safe speed.

Another pet peeve that I continue to experience is the issue with folks not slowing down when it rains. I was so grateful the other day when I was driving back towards Lincolnton and it started to rain (somewhat unexpectedly per the forecast). It was a pretty heavy downpour at times and I was on Highway 150 coming up the road when I had the worst of it, past North Lincoln High School. I slowed down significantly under the speed limit to ensure that I could safely navigate my vehicle and avoid hydroplaning or getting into an accident due to the slippery roadway and poor visibility. The driver of the work truck behind me, who probably was on his way to the next job or even on the way home, was very patient and gave me plenty of room. How much slower should we drive in the rain? AAA says that you should reduce your speed by one-third to ensure your ability to safely navigate your vehicle in rainy conditions (Fehlinger).

Per my subtitle, yes, we have had a lot of growth in our area. New arrivals from New York, I get it. I have New York roots so I say this with love, but please stop with the aggressive car honking. Here in North Carolina, we tailgate, excessively speed and, overall, we are pretty intolerable at times on the roadways, but we still have some level of civility and politeness. When you honk angrily at every little action that annoys you as a true New Yorker, you come across as being obnoxious northerners. We are a bit more reserved and civil in the South. My advice if you’ve recently moved here from the North, is to at least try to blend into the culture somewhat. Welcome, but assimilate.

We are getting ready for a long holiday period of traveling on our roadways, whether it is for vacations or visiting family. I am emphasizing that we should be especially mindful that more families and children are on the roadways during this time of year. It is also easier to be distracted with so much excitement that we can neglect putting our focus on driving safely. Thanksgiving in a sense sets off over a month of parties, gatherings and celebrations. My call is for all of us to drive as if the lives of everyone else on the roadways depend on us – because they do. Finally, please, if you do drink alcoholic beverages, do not drink and drive. I wish everyone a very joyous and safe holiday season.

Works Cited

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Year." *AAA Newsroom*, AAA, 16 Nov. 2026, newsroom.aaa.com/2026/11/aaa-thanksgiving-holiday-travel-forecast/.

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