



FACT SHEET

Module 4.2

Driving on Hills



Driving in the mountains can be a wonderful and exhilarating experience, but it can also be tiring and cause extra wear and tear on a vehicle. Here are ten time-tested tips to help make any drive more enjoyable.

1. Make sure the brakes, windshield wipers, defroster, heater, and exhaust systems are in good condition.

Ensure that the brake and transmission fluids are filled and have been changed within the interval recommended for the vehicle. Brake fluid, as it ages, takes on moisture and contaminants that lowers its boiling level. Frequent brake use can overheat the fluid and you can lose braking efficiency when it is most needed. Routine tire checks can ensure the tires are properly inflated.

2. Don't go down a mountain hill any faster than you can go up it. Don't use the brakes to reduce downhill speed. Downshift to a lower gear. Resist the temptation of driving fast down a hill.

3. On steep upgrades, downshift to a lower gear, watch the temperature gauge, and turn off the air-conditioning if it starts to overheat. If the engine needs cooling, find a safe place to pull off the road, park it and keep the car at a fast idle. Do not shut off the engine, and never remove a hot radiator cap. A faster way to cool an engine is to turn on the heater, but usually that option is a bit unpleasant for the vehicle occupants.

4. Don't "hug" the centerline. Most mountain roads are narrower than Interstate highways. Some drivers have a tendency to hug the centerline, but this driving technique is both unwise and irritating to other drivers. If you are hugging the center line, and another center-hugging vehicle comes around a curve from the opposite direction, both drivers may overcorrect and create a dangerous hazard.

5. Always remember that the car going UPHILL should be given the right of way. Always allow plenty of time for passing vehicles to make it back to their lane. Keep in mind that higher elevations diminish a vehicle's available horsepower, and your car may not perform as well at 10,000 feet as it does at sea level.

6. Slowing down for any reason, whether it's to view scenery or because of a steep grade, is acceptable driving behavior, as long as you maintain awareness. If traffic behind you increases to more than three vehicles, look for a designated pullout and let the traffic pass. In many states, failure to allow such traffic to pass can result in a traffic ticket.