

Disaster Driving-ARES Style

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As a member of a local ARES team, you may find yourself setting in the "shack" at your home, office or EOC. You may be on foot or in a mobile communications unit. One thing is for sure, unless you are at a fixed site and remain there, some driving must be done to get to any other location. Worse yet, what if the disaster happens while you are driving? Let's look at some different types of conditions that you may find yourself in and steps that you can take to handle whatever situation confronts you.

How do you respond if an earthquake occurs while driving? Experiencing an earthquake while in a moving vehicle has been compared to driving on four flat tires. If an Earthquake occurs while you are driving:

- Gradually decrease speed
- Pull to the side of the road
- Do not stop on or under overpasses or bridges
- Avoid parking near trees, downed power lines and buildings
- Stop the car and stay down on the floor
- Remain in your car until the shaking stops
- Keep in mind that aftershocks follow the initial earthquake
- Turn on your car radio and listen for advisories
- Do not drive until it's safe and avoid overpasses or bridges
- If driving on a freeway or interstate if it's safe to do so, exit at the first opportunity
- Response after an earthquake may be a daunting experience. If the quake is severe, most of the routes you usually take may be compromised. Preplan with your other team members for such an occasion! Could be, "You can't get there from here".

What about a FLOOD? Hardly a year passes without someone being drowned after attempting driving through floodwaters. Keep the following in mind:

- Never attempt to drive through a flooded roadway!
- Remember, Water may be deeper than it appears
- Water weighs 62.4 lbs per cubic foot
- For each foot that water rises, over 500 pounds of force are applied to the bottom and sides of the car
- In one foot of water enough force can be applied that your car will weigh 1,500 lbs less than it would on dry land
- Cars can float for short periods. In smaller vehicles, you can lose control in only 6 inches of water and even in large vehicles control can still be lost in 2 feet or less!
- If you have driven into floodwater and try to escape your car you can be knocked off your feet by the force of the current

We often do storm spotter duty with the NWS offices around us. What if you are out and a tornado strikes where you are?

- Leave the car and try to find shelter in a building. If you are out spotting, I suggest you preplan this beforehand and park in a location with accessible shelter.
- If there is no building, seek shelter in a ditch or ravine
- Do not use overpasses as shelter! Though thought safe in the past, research has shown this is not true in most cases
- Never try to out run a tornado

In a blizzard, stay in the car!

- Do not leave the car unless you see a safer place that is easily within walking distance for the conditions!
- Start the car for brief periods for heat, but always leave a down wind window open slightly to avoid carbon monoxide poisoning dangers. Be sure the exhaust stays clear of snow.
- Leave the dome light on at night as a sign to possible rescuers
- If you are with others, sleep in shifts

Whatever occurs, you can be better prepared if you carry the following in your vehicle:

- First aid kit (bandages, gauze, tape etc.)
- Bottled water
- Non-perishable foods
- Blanket or sleeping bag
- Flashlight with extra batteries and bulb
- Fire extinguisher (CO2)
- Pocket radio with extra batteries
- Tools (screwdriver, pliers, wire, pocket knife, can opener)
- Tissues and pre-moistened towel Extra clothes and sturdy shoes
- Short rubber hose for siphoning
- Sealable plastic bags
- Local maps for the area
- Matches/Toiletries
- Gloves

In all cases carry your ID's, FCC licenses and a copy of KRS 432.570 and cooperate with public safety officials, they are trying to ensure your safety and that of others.