Headline: Fall brings new challenges to motorists

Deckhead: Wet leaves, cooler temps are among serious factors

There never is a good time to lessen our safety behind the wheel. Driving is privilege. How seriously we approach it could be the difference between life and death.

That is why our habits evolve with the seasons. It’s essential in maintaining our safety on the roadways. The transition from summer to autumn might not seem serious, but it shouldn’t be taken lightly.

Less light and cooler temperatures become more common during fall months. Wet leaves, which could cause a vehicle slide, and other significant factors increase the importance of safe-driving habits.

Motorists commuting to their places of work early likely will be driving under nighttime circumstances. It increases the importance of keeping headlights clean or having them replaced should they begin to show signs of deterioration.

Autumn is the season for leaf-peepers, but that also means leaf-covered roads are inevitable. Wet leaves can cause roadways to become slick. Driving at higher speeds could force the car to skid off the road or into another car or barrier, like a lamppost or guardrail.

Check tire pressure daily. Extreme changes in temperatures will cause tires to expand and contract, which could lead to a loss in tire pressure. Prior to starting a vehicle, drivers should clear frost from their windows and check that the tires are properly inflated and have plenty of tread.

Fog is another concern. Cold mornings often lead to foggier conditions. Drivers should set their headlights to low beams. High beams bounce off fog and reflect to the driver, further impairing the ability to see the road. Low beams aim downward and improve visibility.

It also is wise to slow down. Keep an ample distance from the vehicle ahead. It allows for more time to brake should the leading car’s brake lights be shrouded by the heavy fog.

Glare is another concern. Autumn sunrises and sunsets can cause significant glare, making it difficult to see other vehicles, pedestrians, traffic lights or roadways. To combat this:

* Clean windshields inside and out to remove dust particles, streaks and smudges. These can become magnified when illuminated by sunlight and impact visibility.
* Avoid using washing and waxing products that increase a car’s shine. They magnify the sun’s glare on the vehicle, which could cause the light to reflect into the driver’s eyes and cause a blinding effect.
* And keep a pair of sunglasses in the vehicle to protect vision from the sun’s rays. Those who frequently travel at night should consider buying lenses with anti-reflective coating to reduce glare from streetlights and headlights.

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Cutline: SLIPPERY WHEN WET – Falling leaves covering a roadway could become a problem for drivers. Image: alpegor. Adobe Stock.