

SafeDriver Monthly Newsletter

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Questions From Quora

If you've never heard of Quora.com, it's an interesting website where anyone can ask any kind of question and others, who may or may not be experts, will try to answer. Many of the questions are good and they elicit some very interesting answers. However, just as often, the questions are indecipherable or not well thought out. For example, you'll get questions like; "What is it like to get a traffic ticket?" or "How long can I drive on a suspended license?"

The answer to these types of questions is "It depends!" It depends on what state, county, and municipality you live in. It depends on how the laws where you live are written and enforced. It depends on the type of traffic infraction you've committed. In the case of "How long can you drive on a suspended license?" you can drive until you're stopped by the police. That could be days, weeks, months, or years.



In the case of the questions below, sometimes a vague question deserves an answer that the questions author may not have been looking for but the answers are an important part of every new driver's education.

How Fast Is Too Fast

I have an idea that the author of this question is actually asking “How fast can I drive over the speed limit without getting a speeding ticket?” Again, the answer to that specific question depends on where you live and the level of traffic enforcement there. However, if you take the question as it’s written, there’s a deeper question there that needs to be answered.

Most people focus too much on speed limits but posted speed limits are set for ideal conditions. Ideal conditions mean clear, fair weather with dry streets and normal amounts of vehicle and pedestrian traffic. But, into every life a little rain must fall and that’s when the posted speed limit goes out the window. The chances of losing traction and skidding on rain-slicked streets is most dangerous in the first half-hour after the rain begins to fall, so prudent drivers need to give themselves plenty of time to slow down carefully for red lights or stop signs. Snow and ice make the roads extremely dangerous so drivers need to slow down significantly, no matter what the speed limit may be.



Fog, rain, and snow can affect visibility, making it more difficult to see traffic conditions ahead and that prevents a driver from being able to plan for hazards ahead unless the speed is reduced. Last month in Montana, six people were killed when a dust storm clouded I-90 and the drivers of 21 vehicles lost control and crashed into each other. In conditions like

that, any speed is too high and drivers should get off the road to avoid being hit from behind.

Not many people realize that you can receive a traffic ticket for driving “too fast for conditions” even if you’re driving at or below the posted speed limit. How fast is too fast depends and it’s important to know when to slow down.

What are the effects of driving overtime?

This is another vague question and it’s hard to know the meaning behind it. Is it directed at commercial drivers whose daily driving hours are limited by federal law, or is it asking about driver fatigue? One question is a legal question that requires consulting federal regulations. The other is more of a medical question regarding the body’s physical capabilities. Let’s look at the physical question.

DWS or driving while sleepy is a major problem that results in a huge number of traffic fatalities each year. The exact numbers are hard to come by because no one wants to admit they fell asleep and caused a crash.



The real problem comes when people start to feel sleepy and try to push on through. A lot of the advice people give for staying awake at the wheel like; opening the window, turning up the radio, etc., don't really work and, once you start to feel sleepy, it's impossible to tell when you're actually going to fall asleep. Caffeinated drinks work to an extent but, if you're sleep deprived, as soon as the caffeine wears off, you're going to fall asleep. The body will demand it. Driving while sleepy is just as dangerous as driving under the influence.

Between their school hours and all their activities, teens are often sleep deprived and trying to make up for that sleep deficit with energy drinks doesn't work.

On long trips, the road can become monotonous leading to a condition known as highway hypnosis. Experts say to prevent fatigue, you should stop at least every two hours or 100 miles for a break. When you start to feel sleepy, the best thing to do is to get off the road, get a cup of coffee or a Coke and, while you're waiting for the caffeine to kick in, take a short nap. The combination of the nap and caffeine should leave you feeling rested. However, nothing makes up for a good night's sleep.

