

SafeDriver Monthly Newsletter

March 2023



Focusing On the Road Ahead

Driving is a complex task and it takes all your concentration and brain power to do it safely. So, what do you need to do to keep your focus on driving?

Keeping your visual attention on the road is one of the keys to safe driving and there are several things you must keep in mind.

When you're driving, you don't want to keep your eyes fixed straight ahead all the time. Concentrating too much on the road straight ahead can lead to a condition known as highway hypnosis. Highway hypnosis most often happens on long, boring roads and when the driver focuses too much on the road ahead.

Highway hypnosis can lead to drowsiness and that can lead to sleep and catastrophe!

Targeting

Targeting is a method to help you keep your eyes on the road but not so much that you could develop highway hypnosis.

When you're targeting, you want to pick out three zones and understand the importance of each zone.

The **far zone** is approximately 20 to 30 seconds ahead of your vehicle. You can determine how far ahead 20 seconds is by picking a landmark such as a sign or a tree and, as you drive toward it, count one-thousand-one, one-thousand-two, one-thousand-three, etc. If you don't get to the landmark by the time you've counted to one-thousand-twenty, you've picked a spot too far away. If you get to your landmark before you get to one-thousand-twenty, you need to look a little farther out.

At 45 mph, 20 seconds ahead is approximately 1300 feet or the length of four football fields. At that distance, you can get an idea of any problems that may be ahead and you have plenty of time to take action to avoid it by slowing or changing lanes.

The **intermediate or medium zone** is approximately 10 seconds ahead. You're approaching this zone very quickly but you still have enough time to slow or stop before you reach the problem up ahead.

The **close-up zone** is only about five seconds ahead. That still gives you time to stop or swerve but you must make your decision and act on it quickly.



You should shift your vision to the different target zones frequently while, at the same time, remembering to check your mirrors and the situation to the sides of your vehicle.

While targeting, you want to look ahead for potential problems in your lane that may require you to change lanes. Are brake lights coming on ahead? Are the lanes becoming congested?

While sweeping the different target zones, you need to use the S.I.P.D.E. method. S.I.P.D.E. means:

- **Search** – Search the areas ahead and to the sides and rear of your vehicle.

- **Identify** – Identify any potential problems or issues that may be coming up ahead such as children playing near the side of the road or a car about to pull out of a parking lot.
- **Predict** – Predict what might happen if one of those children were to chase a ball into the street or if that other driver doesn't notice you and pulls out of the parking lot into your lane.
- **Decide** – Decide what you will do if your prediction comes true. With a plan already in mind, it'll be much easier to put it into action.
- **Execute** – Execute your plan, if necessary.

By targeting and using the S.I.P.D.E. method, it'll be much easier to remain alert and avoid the hazards of highway hypnosis.

