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Unexpected emergencies – are you prepared?

No matter how many precautions are taken, some emergencies are unavoidable.

Remaining calm and understanding what to do when an on-road emergency takes place will enhance your chances of survival.

Here are a few tips to help you deal with unexpected situations that may arise when travelling.

Engine failure

Engines cut out suddenly for a variety of reasons. Should this happen, put your car into neutral and brake gently.

Remember, braking and steering will require much more effort than usual without the assistance of the engine.

As your car slows, pull off to the side of the road, stop the vehicle and switch the ignition off.

If you're unable to fix the problem yourself, contact RAA Road Service on 13 11 11.

Jammed accelerator

This is not a common problem, but one you may encounter which can create a very dangerous situation.

Quickly put your car into neutral, apply the brakes, steer your car off or to the side of the road.

Do not turn your ignition off until you have left the road and stopped. Disengaging the ignition while driving may cause the steering to lock.

Once your car is stationary switch the ignition off straightaway, as there is a high risk your engine will become damaged.

Contact RAA on 13 11 11 and have your vehicle checked to ensure it is safe to be driven.

Shattered windscreen

When driving, particularly along unsealed roads, other vehicles may throw up stones and rocks, causing your windscreen to shatter.

Should this happen, stop the car in a safe place. Using a blanket or similar, cover all internal and external ventilator openings to prevent pieces of glass falling into them. Cover the bonnet if you have another blanket or similar to protect the bodywork, and then, with your hand covered in a rag or a piece of clothing, push the windscreen out.

Close all windows to stop through-winds as you drive slowly to the nearest windscreen repairer or dealer.

It's a good idea to wear glasses while driving to protect your eyes from insects or any pieces of glass that may become dislodged.

If you regularly travel on unsealed roads, you might want to think about carrying a temporary windscreen which can be fitted in place until you reach a repairer.

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Animals

When driving in rural areas, it is not uncommon to encounter wandering native animals and livestock. Although it is not a pleasant experience to hit an animal or a bird, braking heavily to avoid striking an animal is not recommended.

Where possible, safely reduce your speed to avoid a collision. Never swerve to avoid an animal. This can increase your chances of losing control of your car and becoming involved in a more serious accident.

If you hit and injure an animal, you need to seek aid or take the appropriate steps to alleviate the animal's pain and suffering.

For assistance, contact the RSPCA on 1300 4 77722, or the nearest police station.

If the animal has been killed, remove it from the road to reduce potential dangers to other motorists and contact Traffic Management Centre on 1800 018 313, or the nearest police station, who will arrange for the animal to be collected.

Animals are more active at dusk and dawn. If you can't avoid driving during these times, reduce your speed and remain alert.

Tyre blowouts

This can be one of the most alarming experiences you can encounter on the road. The best advice is not to panic. When a tyre blows, your car may want to veer to one side of the road. Keep a firm grip on the steering wheel as it may turn, sometimes quite violently, as you gently ease off the accelerator.

In both automatic and manual vehicles, use the gears and handbrake to slow your car as you move to the side of the road. Resist the temptation to brake heavily.

Once the car has slowed considerably, brake gently. If a front tyre blows out, be aware that the vehicle will pull towards the side of the blown-out tyre.