

**NEW DRIVERS**  
**DEALING WITH VEHICLE EMERGENCIES**

**ERNIE BERTOTHY:** Welcome to DMV Infocast, an audio production of the Connecticut Department of Motor Vehicles. This is Ernie Bertothy, Infocast Editor.

With us today is **Doug Milone**, a Motor Vehicles Sergeant in the DMV's Danbury Branch Office. Sgt. Milone is here today to talk about dealing with vehicle emergencies.

**ERNIE BERTOTHY:** Well, Sgt. Milone, thank you very much for joining us today, and we're going to be talking about dealing with vehicle emergencies. And what should people do if their vehicle breaks down on the road?

**SGT. MILONE:** Well, it's important to know exactly what to do if your vehicle breaks down or at least have some general idea. You need to try to stop, if possible, in an area where your vehicle can be seen by other drivers. Get off the road if possible. Put your four-way emergency flashers on. If you have flares, use them. Place them behind the vehicle. Don't stand in the road. Open the hood. If available, tie a piece of white cloth to the antennae or the door handle. Staying calm and using good common sense is very helpful in a breakdown.

**ERNIE:** Well, Sergeant, it really just sounds like you just want to keep a level head and just think common sense, and essentially everything else pretty much takes care of itself.

**SGT. MILONE:** Exactly.

**ERNIE:** Okay. Let's talk about equipment failure. It's very likely over the course of a person's driving career that they will experience some sort of malfunction with their vehicle. Can you just go over some of the common equipment failure problems that someone may have? First, let's talk about brake failure. That's a very scary proposition to think that someone's brakes might stop working. But if they do, what advice can you give to that driver?

**SGT. MILONE:** Okay. For brake failure, if you are -- actually, if your brakes stop working, pump the brake pedal several times. This will often build up enough brake pressure to allow you to stop. If that does not work, use the parking brake. Pull on the parking brake handle slowly so you will not lock the rear wheels and cause a skid. Be ready to release the brake if the vehicle does start to skid. If that does not work, start shifting to lower gears and look for a safe place to slow to a stop. Make sure the vehicle is off the road. Do not drive the vehicle without brakes.

**ERNIE:** Right. So certainly that's very good advice. And Sergeant, what about a tire blow-out, another common occurrence that happens with a vehicle. What advice would you give to someone that's faced with that sudden situation?

**SGT. MILONE:** Yeah, sure. If your tire blows out suddenly or goes flat, hold the steering wheel lightly and keep the vehicle going straight. Slow down gradually. Take your foot off the gas pedal and use the brakes lightly. Do not stop on the road if at all possible. Pull off the road in a safe place.

**ERNIE:** Okay, Sergeant, and what about if your engine dies? Again, another scary thought.

**SGT. MILONE:** Right.

**ERNIE:** But it's possible --

**SGT. MILONE:** Right. Right. Right.

**ERNIE:** -- that that could happen.

**SGT. MILONE:** Yup.

**ERNIE:** What do you suggest the --

**SGT. MILONE:** It is very possible. It happens to motorists quite often. If the engine dies while you're driving, keep a strong grip on the steering wheel. Be aware that it may be difficult to turn, but it is possible. Pull off the roadway. The brakes will still work, but you may have to push very hard on the brake pedal because of the loss of power.

**ERNIE:** Right. And another possible scenario would be your headlights suddenly going out. And of course if you're driving at night, that could be very scary. And obviously, you should stay calm. And what else should the driver do?

**SGT. MILONE:** That's correct. Nowadays people drive with their headlights on 24 hours a day, day and night. Of course, it only matters at night when you need to see. If your headlights suddenly go out at night, try the headlight switch a few times. If that does not work, put on the emergency flashers, turn on the signals or fog lights if you have them. Pull off the road as soon as possible.

**ERNIE:** And again, it comes down to common sense.

**SGT. MILONE:** That's correct. That's correct.

**ERNIE:** Let's talk about one more. What if the gas pedal were to stick, and again, this is a random situation, but it could happen. What should a driver do?

**SGT. MILONE:** If the gas pedal sticks while you're on the road, and your accelerator is racing, the first thing I would do is just turn the ignition off. Okay. That would kill the power. There are several steps you can take after that, but you really want to avoid any power if your accelerator is sticking and you're going at a high rate of speed especially.

**ERNIE:** And then obviously you want to keep your eyes on the road.

**SGT. MILONE:** That's correct.

**ERNIE:** And you want to quickly shift to neutral if at all possible. And of course pull off the road obviously.

**SGT. MILONE:** That all comes with it. Yes.

**ERNIE:** As safe as possible. So basically, what's the message here, Sergeant, when you're dealing with an emergency? What are the lasting thoughts that we want to leave with drivers when they're faced with situations such as the ones we just went over?

**SGT. MILONE:** Well, I guess it's probably most important to stay calm. Don't get excited. Try to collect your thoughts if you can do it at all possible. Of course, different emergencies will create different thoughts in people's minds, and they'll react differently, but it's very important to stay calm, collect your thoughts and think logically.

**ERNIE:** Great. Well, Sgt. Milone, thank you very much for joining us today.

**SGT. MILONE:** You're quite welcome.

**ERNIE BERTOTHY:** And thank you everyone for listening. I'm Ernie Bertothy, Infocast Editor. And you've been listening to an Infocast produced by the State of Connecticut Department of Motor Vehicles.