



DRIVER SAFETY BULLETIN – COUNTRY ROADS

Over 50% of fatal road crashes occur in remote places and rural areasⁱ. The majority of these incidents are single vehicle incidents, typically involving the driver leaving the road and impacting an object such as a power pole or tree. These types of incidents have a high chance of producing serious injury, due to the rigid nature and often narrow dimensions of the objects struck, as well as the high speedsⁱⁱ.

The table below was compiled using data provided by the Bureau of Infrastructure, Transport & Regional Economicsⁱⁱⁱ.

Year	Urban	Rural	Total
1990	55%	45%	100%
1994	46%	53%	100%
1998	45%	55%	100%
2002	41%	59%	100%
2006	46%	53%	100%
Average	47%	53%	100%

Percentage of fatalities in urban and rural areas in Australia

Factors that contribute to rural and remote area incidents include differences in road infrastructure (e.g. curves and unsealed roads), speeding, light conditions, unsafe overtaking, livestock and wild animals, greater travelling time resulting in loss of concentration, fatigue and drink-driving. The majority of single vehicle incidents that occur on rural roads involve drivers aged under 25, while older drivers are more likely to be involved in multiple vehicle incidents^{iv}.

Here are some safety tips to keep in mind while travelling in the country this holiday season:

- ✓ When entering an area you are unfamiliar with, it is a good policy to always drive 10% below the speed limit in unfamiliar rural areas.
- ✓ Despite the speed limit often being 100km/hr, keep in mind that rural roads have narrow and undulating profiles, many unsafe overtaking opportunities and a mix of heavy and lighter vehicles on the road.
- ✓ Livestock are legally allowed to move along the road between properties or graze on the roadside. These areas will have signage put in place to alert drivers, always be patient and slow down in those situations.
- ✓ Wild animals tend to move more during hot or dry seasons in search of water sources. They can behave unpredictably when confronted by an oncoming vehicle. The best way to avoid collision with wild animals is to beware of the danger periods at dusk and dawn.
- ✓ Temperatures in rural areas can vary drastically (between -10°C to 42°C), this means the weather can often be unpredictable. Reduce your speed to below the speed limit during bad weather conditions. (Eg. Rainy seasons can deposit roadside debris onto the road surface causing it to be very slippery).
- ✓ Always plan your trip and make sure you have enough rest before you travel. Take a short nap as soon as you feel the signs of fatigue (eg. Frequent blinking, yawning and reduced concentration).

Safe Driving,

The team at Innovation Group

ⁱ http://www.bitre.gov.au/publications/95/Files/IS41_Fatal_Road_Crashes.pdf

ⁱⁱ <http://www.monash.edu.au/miri/research/reports/muarc217.pdf>

ⁱⁱⁱ http://www.bitre.gov.au/publications/95/Files/IS41_Fatal_Road_Crashes.pdf

^{iv} <http://www.monash.edu.au/miri/research/reports/muarc212.pdf>