



Over the Edge & Back

What to do if you drive off the pavement edge

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Source: AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety

Pavement Edge Drop-off

- A common safety hazard
- Particularly dangerous if the height is 2 inches or more
- Occurs when 1 or 2 of your tires “drop-off” the pavement
- Catch you by surprise!
- Easy to lose control of your vehicle
- Pavement edge drop-off crashes are over twice as likely to be fatal relative to other crashes on similar roads!



What to do if you drive off the pavement edge...

- It's not about returning to the road quickly; it's about returning the road safely!
- Follow the steps on the next slides...



If the shoulder is wide enough and your path is clear

- Continue to look at the road ahead and drive all the way onto the shoulder.
- Gradually stop and collect yourself.
- Wait for a large break in traffic and then drive back onto the road.

If you can't drive all the way onto the shoulder and stop

- Continue to look and steer straight ahead. Do not try to steer back onto the road immediately – this can cause you to lose control of your vehicle and crash.
- For example, if you're driving at a high speed and you suddenly steer sharply, you may accidentally drive into oncoming traffic. Moreover, if your tires are close to the pavement edge and you attempt to drive back onto the road, they may “scrub” against the edge rather than surmount it. This makes it very difficult to drive back onto the road, and you are at risk of overcorrecting, losing control, and crashing into another vehicle or roadside object.

Scrubbing

- If you drive too close to the pavement edge, tire scrubbing will make it difficult to return to the road.



If there are no obstacles directly in front of you

- Steer to “straddle” the pavement edge.
- Move the tires that are off the road away from the pavement edge, and then steer parallel to it.
- This will prevent your tires from scrubbing. Most importantly, continue to look at the road ahead.



Do not slam on brakes!

- Ease off the gas pedal.
- If you need to brake, brake very gently.
- If you brake hard while your tires are on different surfaces, this can cause your vehicle to skid.

Slow down gradually

- Slowing down will help you get back onto the road without losing control.
- If there are no obstacles in front of you, slow down to 25 mph or less before mounting the pavement.

Take time to “Calm Down”

- If you have room, drive all the way off the road and as far onto the shoulder as possible to stop.
- Breathe!

Wait until it's safe

- After you've slowed down or stopped, wait until there is a gap in traffic. Do not try to drive back onto the road if there is any traffic in your lane, or an adjacent or oncoming lane.
- When the road is "all clear," turn the steering wheel about one-quarter turn to the left.
- Drive back onto the pavement. When all of your tires are on the pavement, steer back to the right to stay in your lane.



Call for help

- If you cannot safely return to the roadway, drive as far off the pavement as you can, come to a gradual stop, and call for help.