

# MERGING SAFETY

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## Overview

Interstate entrance and exit ramp interchanges are the cause of more collisions (on a per mile basis) than other stretch of roads/highways. It's not hard to understand why.

Merging, while simple in theory, inspires fear in many motorists and even some commercial drivers, too. Merging calls for quick decisions, moderate to high speeds, and there's little room for error in heavy traffic. Add to this mix the presence of blind spots around your vehicle, aggressive or discourteous drivers, and you've got a recipe for disaster.

Despite these obstacles, the person who is attempting to gain access to the flow of traffic needs to spot a gap, time their entry, and signal ahead of time. The drivers who are already on the highway need to judge their own speed and may need to adjust their speed slightly to allow the other driver to merge ahead of them – “if everyone is cooperating and paying attention”.

## Yield? Who, Me or Them?

To **YIELD** means a driver gives the right-of-way to another driver or pedestrian.

Where vehicles are likely to meet one another (with or without the help of signs or signals to regulate traffic) there are rules that say who must yield the right-of-way. These rules tell drivers who goes first and who must wait in different traffic situations.

The law says who must **YIELD** the right-of-way; it does not *give* anyone the right-of-way.

Of course, you should do everything you can to prevent striking a pedestrian or another vehicle, regardless of the circumstances.

## Merging onto Highways

With rare exceptions, entering an interstate highway starts with an **on ramp** (or “entrance ramp”) that leads to an **acceleration lane**. The acceleration lane is usually straight (or parallels the slight curve of the highway) so that you have a space to safely speed up and match the speed of the neighboring traffic.

While on the entrance ramp, start checking traffic conditions on the highway. You want to have a sense of openings in traffic as early as possible so that you will not run out of room on the acceleration lane.

Vehicles that end up moving very slowly or coming to a stop in the acceleration lane create a hazard to other motorists and could be in danger of being struck from behind. Use your directional (“turning”) signal to warn others of your planned move.

## SUMMARY

Properly yielding the right-of-way can help prevent accidents. The right-of-way is something that is given to others on the roads/highways.

There may be times when you will need to give the right-of-way even when another driver is not following the rules of the road in order to avoid an accident.