

# Driving a vehicle in poor condition isn't only unsafe, it's against the law

*Making sure your vehicle is properly maintained may be the best gift to give fellow motorists this holiday season*

**D**o you remember not too long ago when I was carrying on about how I really get into Christmas and couldn't wait to put up the tree and all that?

Well, I did forget about the one really crummy thing that is bundled up with all the goodness of the holiday season: Holiday shopping.

You see, like every guy my DNA is actually programmed to make me hate malls. Especially malls that are packed to the rafters with frustrated shoppers dying to spend their money on almost anything as long as they can head back to the safety of the parking lot within the next five minutes.

It's nuts, but there I am, wandering with everyone else because my wife is an unreasonable woman who won't do my Christmas shopping for me.

Of course, in order to get to the malls we have to wait patiently in long lines of traffic. (I guess that makes two crummy things about the season.)



**Road  
Wise**

**Paul  
Allen**

I'd like to share a little ditty I came up with while idling (no pun intended) my time away on the city streets. It's based on my actual driving experience, and set to the tune of a holiday favourite. Join in and sing along; I'm sure you'll be able to relate:

"While going Christmas shopping, I was distressed to see:

*Twelve broken taillights,  
Eleven screeching brake pads,  
Ten crunched-in doors,  
Nine shimmying frames,  
Eight fractured windshields,  
Seven missing mirrors,  
Six trucks burning oil,  
Five burnt out headlights,*

*Four dead back-up lights,  
Three bald tires,  
Two burnt out brake lights,  
And an illegal, homemade trailer."*

Based on the phone calls, letters and emails I've received, many drivers out there have come across the same driving delights, and let's just say they're not singing.

Driving a vehicle in poor condition isn't only unsafe, it's against the law. Here's the page right out of the Highway Traffic Act. Well, sort of. I've summarized the main points. If you're looking for the actual quoted text from the Act, you can check out the government website at [www.gov.mb.ca/chc/statpub/free/index.html](http://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/statpub/free/index.html). So, here it is:

"Nobody shall drive a motor vehicle upon a highway or, authorize or a motor vehicle to be driven upon a highway, unless:

(a) *all its lights are working. That means all: back up, signal,*

*headlight and brake;*

(b) *it is equipped with brakes (no kidding) and the brakes are capable of bringing the vehicle, when traveling under normal conditions at 30 kilometres per hour, to a full stop within a reasonable distance;*

(c) *the owner has complied with all the requirements of the Act;*

(d) *it is equipped and constructed the way the Act says it should be;*

(e) *it is mechanically sound and fit to be driven on a highway;*

(f) *it is not in a condition that is likely to cause injury to persons or property;*

(g) *it is loaded so it is not likely to cause injury to persons or property (nix the idea of reaching through the passenger windows and hanging onto roof rack contents)."*

A burnt out headlight or a cracked windshield may not seem like a big deal, but they can and do cause

accidents. It makes sense: If you can't see what's in front of you, either because your vehicle can't illuminate the road, or because your windshield has more cracks than a sidewalk, you're in trouble.

And, if other drivers are using the Force to guess what your next move is because your signal lights aren't working, they're in trouble too.

It's your responsibility to make sure your vehicle is in proper working order. It might be a five dollar bulb, or a more expensive repair, but if it needs to be done, do it. It is unnecessarily risky - and supremely irritating - for all the responsible vehicles owners to have to share the road with poorly maintained vehicles.

Have a **RoadWise** Christmas!

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