

Capital Insurance Agency of Wisconsin

If you're planning a trip this Labor Day Weekend, a little advanced planning can go a long way toward making your vacation safe and fun for everyone. Here are some tips to help keep you organized — and prepared for whatever may come your way.

PACK SMART

- Use a checklist. We all hate the feeling of forgetting to pack something. To avoid leaving any essentials at home, create a list a few weeks before you leave — and add to it as you think of new items. Then, pull out the list as you start packing and check off items as you go.
- Make extra space. Avoid the temptation to fill your vehicle up to the roof. This obstructs the view from your rearview mirror and severely limits your visibility. Instead, consider a rooftop cargo box or hitch-mounted cargo carrier to create extra storage space.
- Keep pets safe. Is the family dog headed to the beach with you? Use a pet carrier or harness device to keep him safe for the ride. Oh, and don't forget to pack a portable water bowl and some extra food for rest stops.

KNOW YOUR ROUTE

- Use your GPS. Before you leave home, enter all of your destinations into your vehicle's GPS system or a mobile navigation app. This will give you real-time updates on travel time and save you from searching for addresses at the last minute.
- Plan for traffic. Construction delays can strike anytime, anywhere in the summer. And driving through a major city during rush hour could add hours to your itinerary. Know where congestion is possible and plan to travel during off-peak hours. Mobile navigation apps like Google Maps or Waze can also help by predicting traffic time and suggesting alternate routes if you get stuck.
- Bring an atlas. Even though you haven't used one in ages, keeping a road atlas in the car is always a good idea. With an old-school paper map, you don't have to worry about losing your GPS signal or running out of battery. And if you have kids, they may get a kick out of tracking your travels.
- Skip the toll booth. If you'll be traveling on the turnpike, consider ordering an electronic transponder like E-ZPass. Using an electronic toll system

allows you to skip the cash lines and pay lower fares. Already have a toll pass? Make sure your credit card information is up-to-date so you can reload your device when it runs low.

PREPARE YOUR VEHICLE

- Schedule a multi-point inspection. This type of inspection, usually done at a dealership or independent auto shop, is a great way to get a snapshot of your vehicle's overall condition. A trained mechanic can let you know of any maintenance issues to fix before they get worse (or more expensive).
- Check your tires. Before you leave home, inspect the condition of your tires and inflate them to the pressure recommended by your vehicle's manufacturer. If your tires are low on tread, replace them before you hit the road. You can check by using "the penny test." Just insert a penny upside down into a tread groove. If you can see the top of Lincoln's head, it's time for new tires.
- Change your oil. Road trips can rack up the miles on your car in the span of just a few days. Look ahead to preventative maintenance, like oil changes, that may come due while you're traveling. Taking care of it before you leave is not only good for your car — it's good for peace-of-mind, too.
- Top off fluids. Don't wait until your windshield is covered with bugs to find out your washer fluid is empty. Before your road trip, check all of your vehicle's fluid levels. That includes windshield washer fluid, antifreeze, brake fluid, oil and power steering fluid. Top them all off as needed.

BE READY FOR ANYTHING

- Do your research. Sometimes, a little knowledge can go a long way toward getting you out of an unexpected situation. Do you know how to jump-start a dead battery? Or what to do if your car overheats? Study up in advance.
- Check your emergency kit. If you find yourself stranded, a well-stocked emergency kit could help you get back on the road quickly and safely. Pre-assembled kits are available to purchase, or you can use this guide to assemble your own emergency kit.
- Organize your glovebox. If you happen to get in an accident, it's nice to have the documents you need at your fingertips. Make sure you have a copy of your vehicle registration and an up-to-date insurance ID card.

TAKE A BREAK

- Make regular stops. While eliminating stops can help you get to your destination sooner, it's not the most enjoyable way to travel. Stopping to take a short break every few hours will give everyone a chance to stretch their legs, and can help you stay more alert behind the wheel.
- Pack healthy snacks. Chips, chocolate and soda. Every kid's dream meal. To avoid the sugar highs after every rest stop and gas fill-up, pack a small cooler filled with bottled water, cereal bars, fruits and vegetables. Avoid salty foods or sugary drinks that may actually make you thirsty, or heavy foods that can make you tired.
- Find ways to pass the time. "How much longer?" "Are we there yet?" "I'm bored!"

PROTECT WHAT MATTERS MOST

When it comes to packing for your road trip, we know the people you travel with are your most important cargo. That's why we're here — to help you make sure they're protected.