



DRIVING MOTOR VEHICLES ON ESTONIAN ROADS



Issued by the Estonian Transport Administration

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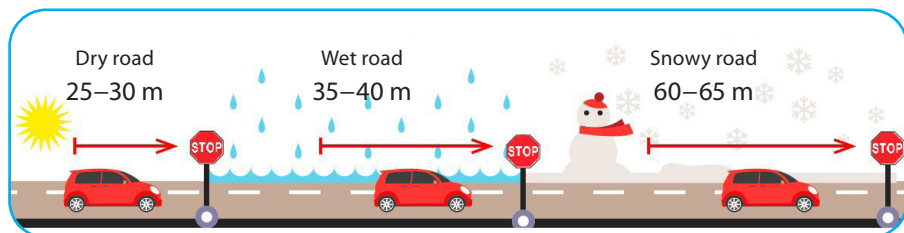


DEAR ROAD USERS,

Estonia is located in Northern Europe, on the eastern shores of the Baltic Sea. As a result, its climate is characterised by abrupt fluctuations in temperature, dampness and strong winds. The fact that Estonia has four distinct seasons – spring, summer, autumn and winter – is an important factor to consider when using our roads.



The country experiences a lot of dark, rainy and misty days. As such, visibility may be bad when using our streets and roads. Winter is often snowy and high snowdrifts can form at roadsides, lowering visibility. The pavements and roads are often slippery and cause the stopping distance of vehicles to increase considerably (see figure). These guidelines provide an overview of the traffic rules in Estonia and suggestions on how to travel safely as a driver of a motor vehicle.



Length of stopping distance at 50 km/h depending upon weather conditions

Key definitions are given at the end of the guidelines in order to help you better understand the text.

Estonia is divided into counties, municipalities and cities. Tallinn is the capital, but there are 47 other cities in a total of 15 counties. The country has many low-density areas, meaning that villages and settlements are often far apart from one another. We have many roads outside settlements that connect villages, townships and cities. Our traffic environment is constantly changing. Traffic in the countryside is different from traffic in smaller settlements, which is of course very different again from traffic in the cities. There are a lot of wild animals in our forests, and during the autumn and winter mating and hunting seasons there is a particularly high danger of animals running out in front of vehicles.

Road use in our country is regulated by the Traffic Act. The traffic culture of every country is different, and requirements and rules specific to Estonia have to be followed here. You also need to show consideration to other road users and refrain from taking unnecessary risks.

Take care of yourself and those around you and don't put yourself or others in danger.



USING ESTONIAN ROADS AS A DRIVER OF A MOTOR VEHICLE

In order to drive a motor vehicle, you must have the right to drive a vehicle in the corresponding category, which is issued and renewed by the Estonian Transport Administration. Driving licences are issued to (and renewed for) Estonian citizens living permanently in Estonia and foreigners living in the country on the basis of a residence permit. Applicants must have a valid health certificate issued by a health care service provider.

If you come to Estonia from another country and have a driving licence issued by another country, you will need to check whether the licence is valid in Estonia. More information can be found on the Estonian Transport Administration website at www.transpordiamet.ee.

Obligations and restrictions of drivers:

- ▶ The driver of a vehicle is responsible for their own safety and that of other road users. Before driving, the driver must ensure that all passengers in both the front and back seats have fastened their seat belts.
- ▶ Passengers may only sit in the seats provided and in the manner set out in the technical passport.
- ▶ Vehicles should not be driven when tired or ill if this stops you from identifying the traffic conditions and following the traffic rules.
- ▶ By law, a driver is not allowed to do things while driving that could interfere with their driving or identification of traffic conditions. This includes holding a phone while driving and using a phone without a hands-free set. It is also forbidden to eat and smoke.



- ▶ Drink-driving is forbidden. Drivers who have a blood alcohol level of 0.2 or above (0.1 mg/l in exhaled breath) are not permitted to get behind the wheel.
- ▶ Drivers must notify other road users of their actions early enough so that they can be taken into account. The indicator light must be activated at least three seconds before starting to drive, manoeuvring or stopping.
- ▶ If a driver sees a child or a bus with a children's sign on the road or at the edge of the road, they must be very careful and drive at a speed that will enable them to avoid danger. The driver must give way to children crossing a road if the person who is with the children gives a signal.



TECHNICAL CONDITION OF THE VEHICLE

Any vehicle intended to be used on Estonian roads must be registered and have passed technical inspection within five days of the vehicle being put into use in Estonia. Information about the individuals connected to a vehicle (its owners and users) is entered in the register with the vehicle's information. After initial registration, the vehicle must be regularly inspected; the frequency of the inspections depends on the category and age of the vehicle. More information about these requirements can be found on the website of the Estonian Transport Administration.

Vehicles in Estonia must also have motor third party liability insurance. This will cover any damage that the driver causes with their vehicle to a third party.

The vehicle must have the following accessories:

- ▶ Wheel chocks
- ▶ Warning triangle
- ▶ First aid kit (if the vehicle is owned by a company or it is a public transport vehicle)
- ▶ Fire extinguisher
- ▶ Safety vest – in the event of an emergency stop in low visibility or at night, the driver must wear a safety vest when exiting the vehicle and stepping onto the road. We recommend that any passengers do likewise.



TRAFFIC CULTURE IN ESTONIA

Estonia drives on the right-hand side of the road.

The highest permitted speed on highways (i.e. roads outside settlements) is 90 km per hour, whereas on roads within cities and settlements it is 50 km per hour, and in calm traffic areas 20 km per hour. Depending on the traffic and road conditions, speed limits on some roads may be raised during the summer. Obstructing other vehicles by driving at an unnecessarily low speed is forbidden in Estonia.

Vehicles must maintain a safe distance between one another, as this helps to avoid collisions from behind. The length of the distance between vehicles depends on the road and weather conditions: in normal conditions, there should be at least two seconds between them in settlements, and at least three seconds on roads outside of settlements. To visualise this distance measured in seconds, the gap between you and the vehicle in front of you should fit another car in it in city traffic, and at least two vehicles on highways.



Road users in Estonia are considerate of one another and follow the obligation to give way.

As a driver you must give way to:

- ▶ anyone using a pedestrian crossing, i.e. pedestrians, wheelchair users, skateboarders, rollerbladers, riders of scooters, kicksleds and the like and people with their bicycle or other personal light electric vehicle (electric scooter or skateboard, Segway, monowheel, etc.) beside them;
- ▶ pedestrians, cyclists, users of personal light electric vehicles, self-driving delivery robots, mopeds and mini-mopeds who cross the road onto which the driver is turning;
- ▶ a vehicle whose blue flashing lamp or blue warning light is switched on, with or without an accompanying siren;
- ▶ drivers on the road when you are merging with the flow of traffic;
- ▶ public transport vehicles (buses, trams and trolleybuses); and
- ▶ railway vehicles.

When approaching an unregulated pedestrian crossing, drivers must drive at sufficiently slow speed to avoid endangering pedestrians who want to cross the road. If necessary, drivers must stop so that pedestrians can cross.



In Estonia, horns may only be used to signal danger or attract the attention of another road user outside of a settlement. Drivers may only blink their lights to attract the attention of other road users.

TRAFFIC SIGNS



This sign indicates a place where you have to follow the road traffic rules that are meant for settlements. Unless a traffic sign indicates otherwise, the speed limit within a settlement is 50 km/h.



Driving speed in settlements



Driving speed outside of settlements

Drivers must adjust their speed to the situation, but without exceeding the speed limit.

Depending on the road and traffic conditions, safety and the category of a vehicle:

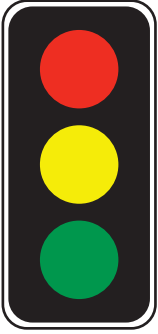
- ▶ the Estonian Transport Administration may increase the speed limit on rural roads to 120 km/h; and
- ▶ local authorities may increase the speed limit on roads within settlements to 90 km/h.



Calm traffic area



This sign indicates a place where the road rules that apply to calm traffic area come into effect. The maximum speed in such areas is 20 km/h. When driving among pedestrians, you must move at the same speed as the pedestrians.



In Estonia, all road users observe traffic lights. Running red lights is never acceptable. The signals have the following meanings:

- ▶ Green means you are free to drive.
- ▶ Flashing green means you are free to continue driving, but informs you that the light is about to turn yellow.
- ▶ Yellow means you are not free to drive. Moving from a place that is meant for stopping is only allowed if stopping there is impossible without endangering road traffic. The driver must move forward if the light comes on at the moment they are on an intersection or pedestrian crossing.
- ▶ Red means you are not free to drive.
- ▶ Red and yellow at the same time mean you are not free to drive, but inform you that the light is about to turn green.

LIGHTS

In Estonia, a moving motor vehicle must have its dipped-beam headlamps or main-beam headlamps as well as its front, rear and side lamps and rear registration plate lamps switched on. During the day, daytime running lights can be used instead of dipped-beam headlamps. Main-beam headlamps may be used when driving at night or if visibility is low. Main-beam headlamps cannot be used if another vehicle (and therefore its driver) is close enough to be blinded by the light. Front fog lamps together with headlamps may be switched on when driving in low visibility due to fog, rain or snow. Rear fog lamps may only be used when driving on roads outside of settlements in low visibility caused by fog, rain or snow, or when snow, dust or mud blown about by the wind caused by driving considerably lower the visibility of the rear lamps.



PUBLIC TRANSPORT LANES



In Estonia, settlements have separately marked lanes for use solely by public transport vehicles offering regular services and taxis carrying passengers. These lanes are marked with appropriate signs and/or road surface markings.

Exceptions:

- ▶ A driver may move into a public transport lane next to the road in the direction of the traffic and not separated from the rest of the road by a continuous line before a turn or stopping in order to enable passengers to enter or exit if this does not obstruct a public transport vehicle offering regular services.
- ▶ The public transport lane on a road may only be crossed in places where this is not forbidden by a traffic control device.

CROSSING A RAILWAY TRACK



Drivers approaching a railway track must be very careful and drive at a speed that allows them to smoothly stop their vehicle if required.

- ▶ In order to give way to an approaching railway vehicle, the driver must stop in front of the crossing barrier, or if there is no barrier, at least five metres from the first set of rails, or if there is an appropriate traffic sign, in front of the sign.
- ▶ If a railway crossing does not have a crossing barrier or signals, a driver may only cross the tracks if they are sure that there are no approaching railway vehicles.
- ▶ You are not allowed to cross a railway track if the signal prohibits it, irrespective of whether there is a barrier or its position. It is also forbidden to cross a railway track while the barrier is closing, is closed or is opening, irrespective of the signal.

DRIVING IN WINTRY CONDITIONS

Because Estonia has a cold climate, snow, sleet and fog are regular features of late autumn, winter and early spring. Before setting out, make sure that the lights and brakes of your vehicle are working. A small brush or scraper should be kept in the car to remove snow or ice from the windows, as well as a snow shovel in case the car gets stuck in the snow.



The roads may be slippery despite snow measures and de-icing. As such, all passenger cars in Estonia must be fitted with winter tyres

from 1 December-1 March. Studded tyres may be used from 15 October-31 March, or until 30 April in the case of ongoing wintry conditions. Studless winter tyres may be used all year round. The depth of the tyre pattern on winter tyres must be at least 3.0 mm, but 4.0–5.0 mm is recommended. The tread depth on summer tyres should be at least 1.6 mm. It is not recommended to use tyres that are more than seven years old, because the use of proper tyres is one of the things that affects road safety.



! 01.12 ... 01.03
✓ 15.10 ... 31.03 (...*30.04)
! < 3,0 mm (♠ 4–5 mm)



! 01.12 ... 01.03
✓ 01.01 ... 31.12
! < 3,0 mm (♠ 4–5 mm)



✓ 02.03 ... 30.11
! < 1,6 mm

In winter, it is recommended that you avoid overtaking, and you should be very careful if the weather is changeable, because the road conditions may be different even in the case of short distances. Road users must remember that in winter they also have to choose a travel speed according to the driving conditions that is below the speed limit. Drivers need to keep a safer distance behind other vehicles than usual in order to have time to react and prevent danger.

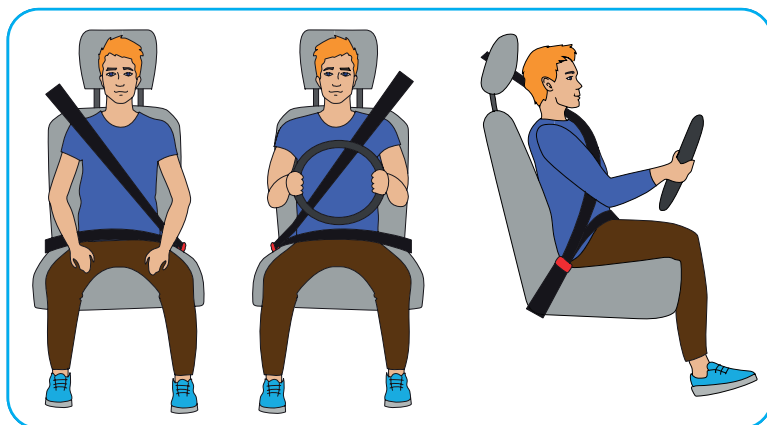
Before setting out, road users can obtain information about the road conditions in different parts of Estonia from the road weather station and road camera website www.tarktee.ee and use it to plan longer trips.

In Estonia, ice roads open when the weather conditions are favourable. These roads are designed to be used by vehicles moving between the mainland and the islands, or different parts of the mainland over frozen stretches of water. More information about open ice roads can be found on the website of the Estonian Transport Administration



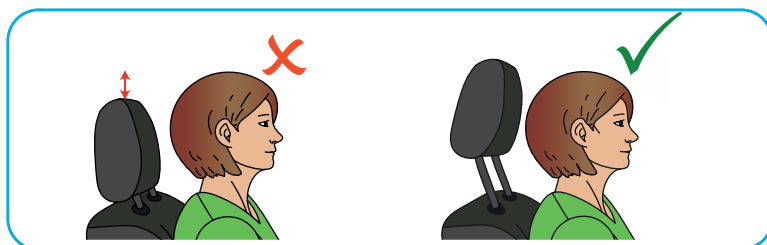
SAFETY EQUIPMENT

In Estonia, all passengers (in both the front and back seats) must fasten their seat belts. Seat belts must always be fastened in taxis as well, and if possible also on buses. The diagonal strap of the seat belt must go over the collarbone, not over the neck or below the shoulder. The horizontal strap must go over the thighs as close as possible to the hip bones, not over the stomach.



When sitting in a vehicle wearing an outdoor jacket or coat, open it and tighten the strap that goes over your chest. In order to avoid injuries, the seat belt must be as close to the body as possible. When fastening the belt, make sure it is not twisted: a twisted seat belt may not withstand the weight of a person and could break in a high-speed collision. One seat belt should be used by only one person.

Headrests should be adjusted for all passengers in such a way that the top edge is at the same level as or slightly higher than the top of their head.



If a child's height does not enable them to be properly fitted with the car's seat belt, a child-safety chair, infant carrier or other proper safety device corresponding to the child's height and weight must be used. A child may be carried in the front seat of a passenger car only if the child is properly secured using a safety device. A safety device that faces the back of the vehicle must not be used when placing a child on a front seat that has an active front airbag. A child must not be held on a person's lap while the vehicle is moving.



EMERGENCY STOPS

When effecting an emergency stop in a place where stopping and parking is otherwise not allowed, the vehicle must be marked by switching on the hazard lights and/or placing a warning triangle on the road. The warning triangle must be placed at least 25 m from the vehicle within a settlement, and at least 50 m away outside of a settlement. You are advised to notify the police about your emergency stop (by calling 112) and to try to minimise or eliminate any danger. If an emergency stop is effected on a railway crossing, the driver must make sure that everyone leaves the vehicle and do everything possible to free the vehicle from the railway tracks.

WHAT TO DO WHEN AN EMERGENCY VEHICLE IS APPROACHING

- ▶ Make sure you know what kind of vehicle it is, where it is coming from and where it is going.
- ▶ If the emergency vehicle is approaching you from behind, check that the situation is safe to do so and then activate your (right-hand) indicator and, if possible, pull over to the right.
- ▶ Do not brake suddenly.



WHAT TO DO IN THE EVENT OF A TRAFFIC ACCIDENT

Consider the situation and any dangers it might pose.

Try to avoid further damage. For example, put on a reflective vest and, if necessary, mark the vehicle(s) with a warning triangle.

Call the emergency number **112** and follow all of the instructions given to you.



GIVING WAY means that a road user must not start or continue driving or make any manoeuvre if this could force other road users to suddenly change their speed or direction of driving.

SETTLEMENT is an area with houses that has entry and exit roads with traffic signs giving information about the road rules in the settlement.

RIGHT OF WAY is the right of one road user to move before another road user.

LOW VISIBILITY is a temporary situation caused by weather or other phenomena (fog, rain, snow, blizzards, twilight, smoke, dust, splashes of water or mud or glare from the sun) in which objects on the road cannot be identified at more than 300 metres.

EMERGENCY STOP is stopping a vehicle when driving is dangerous or technically impossible.

DRIVER is a person who drives an on- or off-road vehicle or guides animals along a road. Driving instructors are also considered drivers during driving lessons and driving practice, and during a driving test, the person taking the test also qualifies as a driver.

ICE ROAD is a temporary road established on a frozen stretch of water for vehicles and pedestrians, marked by appropriate traffic control devices.

TRAFFIC CONTROL DEVICE is a device for managing or guiding traffic (traffic lights, traffic signs, road markings, flashing lamps, barriers, speed limitation devices, thresholds, warning tape, traffic posts, traffic cones, crossing barriers, safety islands and other such devices).

TRAFFIC SIGN is a sign that gives information about the road rules, notifies road users of traffic hazards or helps drivers adapt to the traffic situation.

TRAFFIC HAZARD is a situation that forces road users to suddenly change speed or direction or to stop in order to avoid danger.

TRAFFIC ACCIDENT is an event in which a person is injured or killed or material damage is caused as a result of at least one vehicle moving on or off the road.

MANOEUVRE is any turn or changing of lanes.

SAFETY VEST is clothing designed to boost the safety of road users.

STOPPING means stopping a vehicle on purpose to pick up or let off passengers or to load or unload goods. Stopping with the traffic flow or when requested by a traffic control device or an authorised official is not considered stopping.

LIMITED VISIBILITY is a situation where bends in roads, the crests of hills, roadside facilities, green areas or obstacles on a road reduce visibility in a way that driving on that part of the road at the maximum permitted speed may be dangerous.

RAILWAY CROSSING is a place where a road and railway cross each other. The border of the road and railway crossing is marked by a barrier or, if no barrier is present, traffic signs marking a single or multi-track railway.

VEHICLE is a device powered by a motor or in another way that is meant for road traffic or driving on the road.

PASSENGER is a person who is using a vehicle for travelling but is not the driver.

CALM TRAFFIC AREA is a road meant for both pedestrians and vehicles where the speed of vehicles is reduced by structures or in another way, and where entry and exit roads are marked by traffic signs.

LANE FOR PUBLIC TRANSPORT VEHICLES is, according to the Public Transport Act, the part of a road which is meant for public transport vehicles that provide regular services and for taxis carrying passengers. Said part of the road is marked with appropriate traffic signs or road surface markings.

PEDESTRIAN CROSSING is the part of the road marked with appropriate traffic signs or road surface markings where pedestrians can cross the road, bike path or tramway and where drivers must give way to pedestrians.

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