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Use fog lights correctly and safely

With increasing numbers of vehicles on the road with fog or auxiliary lights, state transportation safety officials are reminding people to use vehicle lighting correctly and safely.

Fog lights are designed to be used at low speeds in fog, heavy mist, snow and other situations where visibility is significantly reduced. Front fog lights are generally aimed and mounted low to increase the illumination directed towards the road surface. In low visibility situations, fog lights should be turned off when an oncoming vehicle approaches. In normal visibility conditions, fog or auxiliary lights should be turned off.

"When a car is using fog or auxiliary lights, it's very visually distracting for oncoming drivers," said Michele O'Leary with the Oregon Department of Transportation's Safety Division.

According to Oregon law, fog and/or auxiliary lights must be used like the high beam headlight system of your car. They must be turned off within 500 feet of approaching an oncoming vehicle and 350 feet when following another vehicle. The color of fog and/or auxiliary lights is also regulated. Fog lights may be either white or amber (yellow). Rules prohibit other colors such as blue.

If your car came equipped with auxiliary lighting, O'Leary recommends knowing where the switches are and how to use them.

If you plan to install fog and/or auxiliary lights as an after market feature, it is important to know that Oregon has adopted federal rules that all manufacturers must meet. Products must be labeled; anything that is labeled "not for street use" cannot be used on public roadways. Manufacturers must meet or exceed SAE and/or DOT manufacturing standards to market their products for street use.

For more information on vehicle equipment and standards, visit ODOT's Transportation Safety Web site, www.oregon.gov/ODOT/TS/Veh_Equipment.shtml, or see the Oregon Driver Manual on the DMV Web site, www.oregondmv.com.

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