

Side-view Mirrors

Eliminating the Blind Spot

Over the years I have developed a habit of glancing over my shoulder as an extra precaution (in addition to checking the mirrors) when I want to change lanes while driving. Wanting to move to the left lane on the interstate, I activate the left turn signal; look in the windshield mounted rear-view mirror; look into the door mounted left sideview mirror; and glance over my left shoulder to see if a vehicle is in my “blind spot.” The blind spot is a position not visible in your rear-view mirror and just outside of what is visible in your left side mirror. Frequently, drivers who are in the lane to your left, slightly behind you, and in the left side of that lane are in your blind spot. My glancing habit has saved me from numerous “close calls” whether I am changing lanes to the left or changing lanes to the right on multilane interstate highways.

If the truth were known most of us position the view from our door-mounted side-view mirrors incorrectly. For some reason we set the left and right mirrors so we see the edge of our vehicle in each mirror. It is comforting to look out and see a part of a rear fender or a rear door handle in each mirror (see photo below). Perhaps it comes from wanting to use those mirrors to back into narrow parking spaces. By setting mirrors in this manner we actually increase the size of the blind spot on each side of the vehicle, which increases our chance of having an accident.

Having recently read a recommended procedure for setting side-view mirrors to eliminate the blind spot, I decided to give it a try. The procedure is to sit comfortably in the driver’s seat with eyes straight ahead. Lean to the left until the upper side of your head is touching the driver’s window. With your head in that position, set the left sideview mirror so you are just able to see the left side of your vehicle in the edge of the mirror. Return to your normal driving position, eyes straight ahead. Estimate the width of your head, then move your head to the right a distance equal to two of those widths. At that point turn your head to look at the right side-view mirror and set it so you are just able to see the right side of your vehicle in the edge of the mirror. What you have accomplished by resetting the mirrors is to widen the field of view to eliminate the blind spots on either side of your vehicle (see photo with reset mirror now showing car previously in blind spot).

After driving for several weeks with these changes in place, my personal evaluation of revised side-view mirror settings would be at the top of a ten-point scale. The awareness of other vehicles in close proximity to yours is very reassuring and leads to safer driving.



Driving has been rated as the most dangerous thing we do each day, especially when traffic is heavy, hectic, and traveling at freeway speeds. Reset your side-view mirrors and remember that your driving skills may be responsible for the safety of people who surround you on the highway as well as those who occupy your vehicle.