



Take a break for safety

Stop at any of the 37 rest areas and information centers along Wyoming highways, and you'll resume your travels refreshed and more alert.

Stretch. Use the rest rooms. Walk the dog. Let the kids run off pent-up energy. You'll be more comfortable and safer when you get back behind the wheel.

Facilities vary from site to site, but in addition to rest rooms, most offer picnic tables, litter barrels and information boards. Some also have grills, recreational vehicle parking spaces and pet exercise areas.

All rest areas are fully accessible to disabled persons. Most have family rest rooms for those traveling with infants, children or anyone needing assistance.

Safety is WYDOT's top priority, starting from the design of a highway and continuing through construction, maintenance and enforcement of traffic laws.

But in the end, it is up to the individual motorists on those highways to stay alert, drive safely and prevent crashes.

Always buckle your seat belt, and make sure all passengers are properly restrained, no matter how short the trip.

Obey speed limits and all other traffic regulations. They exist to facilitate the safe and efficient flow of traffic.

Dangers of drowsy driving

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration statistics indicate there are more than 55,000 fatigue-related traffic crashes in the United States each year, killing about 1,550 people and injuring 40,000.

National Sleep Foundation surveys indicate 60 percent of Americans admit to driving while drowsy.

Drowsiness impairs reaction time, attention and information processing, and can ultimately lead to the inability to resist falling asleep at the wheel.

In Wyoming, drowsiness and fatigue are factors in many single-vehicle rollover crashes, the most deadly crash type on Cowboy State highways year after year.

Avoiding drowsiness

- Allow plenty of time to get to your destination so you have time for rest stops when needed.
- Take a break every 100 miles or two hours, and do something to refresh yourself. Have a snack, switch drivers or go for a walk.
- Avoid driving alone for long distances. A passenger who remains awake can help identify the warning signs of fatigue and take a turn behind the wheel.
- Avoid driving at times when you would normally be asleep.
- Avoid alcohol and medications that cause drowsiness.
- Avoid smoking when you drive. The nicotine and carbon monoxide in tobacco smoke hamper night vision.
- Consume caffeine. The equivalent of two cups of coffee can increase alertness for several hours.
- Take a nap. If you feel you might fall asleep at the wheel, find a safe place to take a 15- to 20-minute nap. But remember, highway shoulders are for emergencies, and are not a safe place to stop and rest.

Sleeping at rest areas

Camping is prohibited at rest areas, but drivers who need rest to safely continue their travels can sleep in their vehicles in the parking lots. The National Sleep Foundation recommends a nap of 15-20 minutes to improve alertness and driving skills.

If you need more than a nap, you can sleep in your vehicle for a longer period, but don't pitch a tent, extend your RV's slideouts or otherwise set up for an extended stay.

Travelers who want to camp will find 175 public campgrounds around the state.

More information about campgrounds and other lodging options can be found in the Wyoming Vacation Directory available online at www.wyomingtourism.org, or by calling (800) 225-5996 or (307) 777-7777.

The cost of providing rest areas

Building and maintaining a statewide system of rest areas is expensive. At current construction and materials prices, the cost can range from \$3 million to \$4 million, depending on the site. WYDOT's budget for maintaining rest areas is about \$2.5 million a year.

Many rest areas are built in locations where services are not otherwise available. Often that means no water, sewer or electrical power systems nearby. The cost of providing those services in remote locations is a significant portion of the cost of rest areas.

Wells must be drilled and water and wastewater treatment systems installed. Passive solar rest area buildings include massive precast concrete panels and exposed aggregate to add thermal mass to the building for passive solar heat storage and to reduce vandalism. Sloping earth berms provide added insulation.

At remote rest areas, WYDOT contracts with local caretakers to clean and maintain the facilities.

Rest areas are built and maintained for the benefit of all the traveling public. Please treat them with respect.



Know before you go

Weather in Wyoming can change quickly, making highway travel difficult and even impossible at times.

Information on road and weather conditions in Wyoming is available by dialing 511 from inside Wyoming and (888) WYO-ROAD (996-7623) from outside the state. 511 travel information on the Web at www.wyoroad.info includes road surface conditions, current weather conditions, a listing of any travel advisories and road closures, Web camera views of conditions on the highways and road construction information.



