

Car Fire Safety

According to Mike Connors, assistant fire chief for the Naperville, Ill. Fire Department, poor car maintenance is the greatest cause of car fires. Most others are caused by mechanical or electrical failure, rather than collisions or rollovers, as most of us would think.

If you attempt to put out a car fire without the proper knowledge or skills, you can put yourself or others in harm's way. Every car fire is different, so it is best to leave putting the fire out to the professionals. The first thing that you should think about is personal safety, think and act quickly. Any vehicle can be replaced, a human cannot.

If a fire occurs while you are moving on a roadway

1. Signal your intentions and move to the right lane.
2. Get onto the shoulder or breakdown lane.
3. Stop immediately.
4. Shut off the engine.
5. Get yourself and all other persons out of the vehicle.
6. Get far away from the vehicle and stay away from it. Keep onlookers and others away.
7. Warn oncoming traffic.
8. Notify the fire department.
9. Don't attempt to try to put out the fire yourself. (The unseen danger is the possible ignition of fuel in the vehicle's tank.)

While the vehicle is stopped in traffic or parked:

1. Shut off the engine.
2. Get far away from the vehicle.
3. Warn pedestrians and other vehicles to stay away.
4. Notify the fire department.
5. Don't attempt to put out the fire yourself. (The unseen danger is the possible ignition of fuel in the vehicle's tank.)

Some additional tips from Tim Sendelback, training officer for the Missouri City Fire Department:

1. Stand up-wind. "Some plastics on today's cars can produce a cyanide gas."
2. Never stand in fluids that are running out of the car.
3. Stand at a 45-degree angle to any bumper on the car. "Some bumpers are fluid-filled. When heated, the pressure could blow the bumper off and cause serious injury to anyone standing nearby."