



# The Rural Clinical School of Western Australia

## DRIVING IN THE MIDWEST

Current as at the 21<sup>th</sup> January 2014

Welcome to Geraldton

One of the great opportunities we have when we live in the Midwest is access to the bush, unsealed roads, magnificent scenery and the sense of freedom and adventure that comes with that.

We get to know, and feel a growing connection to the place.

Driving is an integral part of being able to access this opportunity and is a valued activity in the RCSWA.

Unfortunately driving is also a risky undertaking and we need to understand and respect this. A number of students and staff over the past decade have hit kangaroos and emus. Elsewhere in the state RCSWA staff and students have lost friends or colleagues to crashes.

This policy must be adhered to for ALL trips while in the RCSWA, and read in conjunction with the RCSWA driving policy and the two relevant UWA policies:

<http://www.safety.uwa.edu.au/topics/off-campus/driving>

AND

<http://www.safety.uwa.edu.au/topics/off-campus/field-work-remote>

**On EVERY trip, the RCSWA requires:**

- **A safe vehicle**
- **A safe driver**
- **A responsible driving plan**
- **Completed vehicle checklist to be handed to Administrative Officer prior to leaving – see attached**

*A safe vehicle:*

*RCSWA cars and 4WD:*

The RCSWA is responsible for ensuring the vehicle is road-worthy, and appropriately fitted out. The driver is responsible for checking tyres, oil, water and noting any change in condition that may indicate a problem. *If you note any concerns relating to the safety of an RCSWA vehicle please contact your local administrative person as soon as possible.*

All RCSWA vehicles are covered by a roadside assist programme (RAC).

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In Geraldton, we currently have a Toyota Kluger, a 7 seater 4WD.

## *Private vehicles:*

The owner is responsible for ensuring their vehicle is road-worthy, and appropriately fitted out.

All vehicles leaving the town boundary must be in good mechanical condition and must have:

- Good tyres
- A roadworthy spare tyre (two if going long distances on unsealed roads)
- 5L water / person / day, including some in a container that can be carried with you if you need to leave the vehicle
- Maps / navigation aid
- Communication device (e.g. mobile phone and charger)
- A toolkit for the car, including a working jack
- Small first aid kit
- A blanket and torch

## *Pre-travel vehicle check:*

Before every trip, ensure the vehicle is fit for the journey (by visual inspection, checking gauges, checking oil, water and tyres).

## *A safe driver:*

As with all drivers, staff and students must have a valid driver's licence and adhere to all traffic regulations. Always wear a seat belt.

Obey all road signs! In particular, temporary signs such as 'road closed' or signs related to dangers or road work ahead.

## *Preparing for travel on country and remote roads:*

- All students must pass the pre-RCSWA Driving course.
- All students and staff must complete an "Assessment of country driving experience" form when commencing with the RCSWA. This form will be reviewed and signed off by the lead MC / administrator in each site. If areas of concern are noted, these will be discussed and an individual plan created to address concerns.
- Each site will have a discussion about driving risks and safety tips specific to the region in orientation week.

No RCSWA staff or student is permitted to drive if:

- Tired
- Under the influence of alcohol or drugs

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*A safe journey plan:*

Particular risks to note when driving in the Midwest:

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Relevant information / measures</b>
<b>Unsealed roads</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Slow down - reduce your speed to suit the conditions. There is less traction on gravel roads and it is easier to lose control, compared to driving on a bitumen surface.</li><li>• Engaging 4-wheel drive when driving on unsealed roads improves traction and provides more control.</li><li>• If traffic signs warn of a gravel road ahead, slow down while still on the bitumen.</li><li>• On unsealed roads, follow tyre tracks wherever possible - this will provide firmer ground. Keep away from the loose sand or gravel on the edge of the road – may get bogged or lose control.</li><li>• Slow down more for corners – loose surface reduces traction – very easy to lose control.</li><li>• ABS will work differently on gravel and may increase your braking distance. If you have to brake heavily be aware of the difference in the braking sensation of ABS.</li><li>• Consider using a lower gear when driving to assist with braking.</li><li>• Avoid sudden braking or change of direction – risks loss of control.</li><li>• Watch for dust ahead - oncoming vehicle, or coming up behind a vehicle - headlights on low beam when driving in dust.</li><li>• Slow right down and keep left on the approach to blind corners and crests – other drivers may not be careful on roads used less often.</li></ul>
<b>Damaged roads and other hazards</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Drive slowly and especially carefully after heavy rain as wash outs and large holes can appear unexpectedly.</li><li>• Be careful of deep tyre tracks and ruts from heavy use of unsealed roads/tracks</li></ul>
<b>Road trains (up to 53m long)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Road trains are a <i>common sighting</i> on our roads</li><li>• Road trains require considerable stopping/breaking distance, need extra room on the road and are sometimes slow moving.</li><li>• Be patient.</li><li>• Do not attempt to overtake near junctions - road trains may require two lanes in order to turn.</li><li>• Ensure the road ahead is clear when overtaking.</li><li>• Overtake quickly; don't hesitate.</li><li>• Make allowances for the wind buffeting your car as you pass.</li><li>• Allow the road train to remain on the bitumen, if the road is narrow and it is safe to do so. Minimises flying debris and dust.</li><li>• Do not pull out onto a road when a road train is approaching.</li></ul>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If a road train is approaching from the opposite direction and the road is narrow, slow right down and pull over off the bitumen to let it pass.</li> </ul>
<b>Animals on the road (stock and wildlife)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Kangaroos and emus can appear very suddenly right in front of your car. This may happen at any time of the day or night but in particular around dawn and dusk.</li> <li>RCSWA vehicles are not to be driven outside of towns in the north of WA between dusk / dawn – any breach of this rule will be treated very seriously.</li> <li><i>Don't swerve to miss an animal</i> - you may lose control of the vehicle. Slow down as much as possible and stop, if necessary, until the road is clear. Better to hit the animal if you can't stop than to kill yourself or your passengers.</li> <li>Be mindful that these animals may live very close to or in small towns as well as bush areas</li> </ul>
<b>Travelling on remote roads</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Always let someone know where you are going and your anticipated arrival time. (Call or text immediately when you get to your destination)</li> <li>Carry appropriate equipment, plenty of water and also food (if something goes wrong you can be stuck for long periods in remote locations)</li> </ul>
<b>Extremes of weather (eg heat, floods, cyclones)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Get up to date information from local shires about current road and weather conditions.</li> <li><a href="http://www.bom.gov.au">www.bom.gov.au</a> is a useful site for weather information and warnings</li> <li>Inland roads may be closed due to flooding after local heavy rain</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Heavy Rain:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Slow down or stop, lights on low beam, wipers on high speed.</li> <li>May cause flash flooding – watch for water on road</li> </ul>
<b>Bushfire</b>	<p style="text-align: center;">Fires move fast and are unpredictable:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure headlights are on low beam.</li> <li>Wind up windows; engage the recycle option for air conditioning.</li> <li>Follow advice of police or fire fighters if present.</li> <li>Remain away from the fire until safe to pass through.</li> <li>Smoke can obscure oncoming vehicles so drive with care.</li> </ul>
<b>Driving into the sun</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plan your trip to avoid driving into the sun if possible.</li> <li>Wear sun glasses</li> <li>Slow down as visibility may be impaired</li> <li>Put your lights on to low beam</li> <li>Make sure your windscreen is clean.</li> <li>Take extreme care if you have to overtake, and with animals crossing the road due to reduced visibility.</li> <li>If necessary stop until the sun has gone down sufficiently so that</li> </ul>

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	it is safe to resume driving.
<b>Breaking down / Flat Tyre</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• If you break down, <b>STAY</b> with your vehicle. It will be your shelter/security and as well as being more visible should a search be needed.</li><li>• Do not attempt to open a radiator of a vehicle to check for water if the engine is hot. Leave for several hours to cool before opening.</li><li>• Take care when changing flat tyres that your vehicle is on a stable base.<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Engine turned off and passengers out of vehicle.</li><li>○ Hand brake on and car in gear (or Park for automatic).</li><li>○ Put a block/rock behind and in front of other wheels.</li><li>○ Loosen the nuts of flat wheel before jacking up.</li><li>○ Have the spare wheel ready to put on before jacking up car.</li><li>○ Make sure jack is in correct position so that it can't slip.</li></ul></li><li>• Re-tighten wheel nuts once jack is let down, and re-check at 50 km.</li></ul>
<b>No mobile coverage</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Think about mobile coverage in the area you will be visiting. It is common for the towns themselves to have mobile coverage but the signal may be lost in between. Note that the town of Yalgoo does NOT have mobile reception.</li><li>• Think about whether another device is required (e.g. sat phone, UHF radio, GPS tracking device). Discuss with your medical coordinator if uncertain.</li></ul>
<b>Injury / illness on the road</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Make sure everyone (not just the injured) is protected from the elements, rig up shade or rain cover and provide water.</li><li>• Hot ground/roads can cause burns to people lying on the ground – ensure injured people are on a safe surface.</li><li>• Use mobile or satellite phone if there is coverage. Coverage may be better on a hill. Activate EPIRB if available.</li><li>• <u>If there is no satellite or mobile coverage</u> and there is more than one vehicle travelling send someone to nearest station/settlement with information of distance, (location) number of injured or people involved</li><li>• If there is no coverage and you have let someone know the time of your arrival then be prepared to wait.</li><li>• Loose objects may become lethal projectiles during an accident. Put those items in the boot.</li></ul>



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### Long trips

- Don't drive more than 10 hours per day
- Don't drive when you are tired
- Share driving with others
- Plan a stop at least every three hours for 20 minutes.
- Don't plan to drive after a day's work or after being up at night for obstetrics/emergencies.
- Plan to have a good night's sleep before you go.
- If you feel sleepy while driving, it is better to pull off the road and take a short break or nap.

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