

Reconsider Caravans

Many situations are cited as increasing the probability of an auto accident, such as drinking, cell phone conversations, eating and fatigue. However, evidence is stacking up that a common driving strategy should be added to the list....caravans.

A caravan refers to any situation where one or more vehicles follow a lead vehicle to a destination. Typical only the lead vehicle knows the way to the destination or, may not know the way either, but takes responsibility for finding the way enroute and leading the rest of the driving party while it does so.

While traveling in packs may seem like fun and as a timesaver (with just a single vehicle needing to know the way), it can cause real problems.

Consider how a caravan situation may lead to tragedy:

- The lead vehicle has to pay as much or more attention to what's happening behind it, rather than watching the road ahead
- A time crunch is usually involved with all caravan vehicles concerned with getting to a destination by a certain time
- Caravan vehicles usually follow each other too closely, concerned about maintaining contact
- Caravan members may use cell phones to keep in constant communication.... creating a continuous distraction
- Caravans often force participants to drive in an unfamiliar manner, such as different speed, constant lane-changing, discarding use of turn signals
- Caravans may cause participants to ignore unsafe driving conditions such as darkness, wet or snow/ice covered roadways, and traffic signals

The dangers of caravan travel is increased when the method is used by younger, inexperienced drivers, such as teens going to a football game at another school.

Rather than depending on a caravan and its leader, it would be better to use other, safer methods such as reliable directions, maps, or GPS guidance systems. Drivers may also identify places to safely stop as checkpoints where everyone can meet.

So, in this case, ignore the adage that there's "safety in numbers." That practice clearly doesn't apply in regards to safe driving.

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