

# **College of Forestry 450: Forest Driving**

Safety Policy & Procedure Manual  
Section 400: Forest Field Safety  
Effective: 01 January 2007  
Revised: August 2014

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## **PURPOSE**

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The purpose of this section is a) To ensure that all persons involved in forest field activities are properly trained in safe driving practices on forest roads.

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## **Background Information**

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Driving on forest roads presents a host of safety issues not normally found on paved public roads. Most forest roads in both the national forests and industrial lands are single lane roads, with occasional turnouts and surfaced with rock and gravel. These roads were all originally designed and constructed to be logging roads and are commonly steeper and windier than public highways, and probably most important, they were designed and constructed to be single lane roads. In addition, most roads are gated with special vandal-resistance gates that have their own hazards associated with them.

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## **Applicability**

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All academic, research, students, and visitors in the College of Forestry

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# Procedure

## General Driving Practices

When driving on forest roads, you will normally see only one set of wheel tracks in the road. This means that if someone is coming towards you, they are driving in the same set of tracks! There are some practices that make this situation safer.

Drive at a speed where you can stop in  $\frac{1}{2}$  the distance that you can see down the road. That way, when you meet someone who just came out from around a blind corner, you can each stop before hitting the other vehicle. For most forest roads under good conditions the maximum safe speed is 15-20 MPH.

Stay to the right side of the road around blind corners. Usually the sharp blind corners have wide spots for the outside lane to use. Make it your regular practice to swing wide around these corners in case someone is coming the other way. These roads were built for limited traffic volumes. Today there are far more vehicles driving around in remote parts of the forest.

Pay attention to the road as far ahead as you can. Often you can see part of the road where you will be next, even when you can't see around the next corner. Sometimes it is even in sight out your side window. Notice if there are any vehicles there that you will be meeting soon. A good practice on dry days is to look ahead for dust indicating another vehicle coming.

A number of other safe practices include:

- When driving on forest roads you should always have headlights on to help others see your vehicle approaching.
- All passengers as well as the driver must wear seat belts whenever the vehicle is moving. This is also state law.
- Every vehicle should have a first aid kit and all persons in the vehicle should know where the first aid kit is located.
- On forest roads, trucks, lowboys, graders, and emergency vehicles have the right-of-way. Whenever you need to move over to the right you should remember to stay out of the ditches and be especially careful of soft shoulders which are typical on forest roads.

## **Forest Vehicles**

Know your vehicle well. In many cases you will be driving a vehicle that is different from your personal vehicle. It may be larger in size and/or engine power and likely have 4 wheel-drive. If it does have 4 wheel-drive, make sure you know how to engage and disengage it before you need to use it. Some vehicles are automatic and require nothing more than a simple button push from the cab while others are fully manual and require you to manually lock the wheel hubs from the outside. If you are alone and need to do this, turn off the engine and put the vehicle in park before getting out to lock the hubs.

## **Public Use of Forest Roads**

On state and federal lands in particular, the roads and forests are used by the public sometimes in large numbers. A good practice when encountering others hiking or biking on the roads is to assume that they may have dogs with them. You should be alert to the possibility that a pet dog may be nearby in the brush or across the road running loose. When encountering bicyclists remember they do not have as many options for moving over on loose gravel. Be courteous as well as safe and slow down. Horseback riders pose an additional safety concern. Horses by nature are prone to panic at the slightest occurrence. This poses a danger for the rider and it is best to stop and allow the horse and rider to pass unless the rider motions for you to pass.

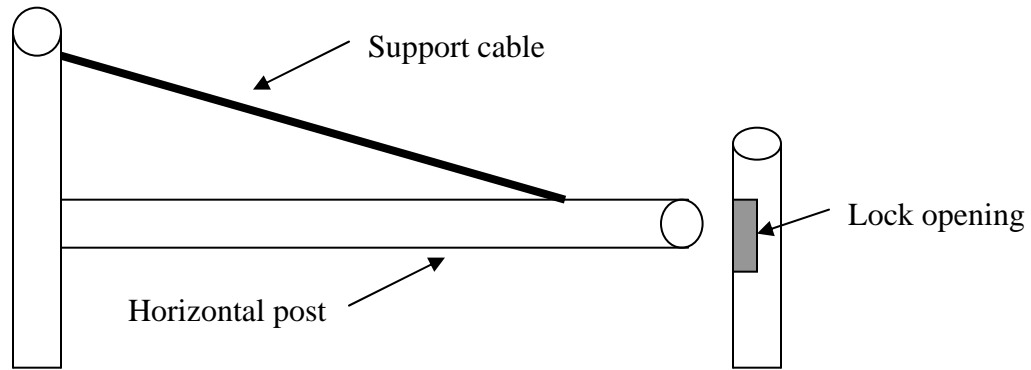
## **Active Forest Operations**

If you are visiting or come upon an active forest operation you should always consider the following.

- Stay well away (300 feet or more) from equipment until the operator acknowledges your presence, stops the machine, and motions for you to proceed forward.
- If you come across steel cables on the ground across the road do not drive over them until you have been instructed to. Many of these are “live” lines and could move at any moment.
- Be aware that the road surface around active operations may be quite soft and disturbed. Drive carefully around these.

## **Forest Gates**

Forest roads are generally controlled by steel post gates similar to the one shown. The gates have a locking mechanism inside the opening in the small post and in some cases will have multiple locks in a configuration that allows the gate to be opened by unlocking any one of the locks present. It is important that before opening one of these you carefully note the configuration and are able to replace it the same way. Failure to do this could result in becoming locked behind the gate.



The lock opening in the small post is a favorite place for wasps and hornets to build nests. In addition, vandals have been known to place broken glass and other objects inside these openings. ***NEVER place your hands inside to open a lock without first looking inside.***

The cable that attaches the horizontal post is a support cable. You should always pay attention to its condition. Vandals have been known to cut or damage this support cable. ***NEVER pull a gate open toward you. Always push it away.*** If the horizontal post were to fall off the hinge it will land on the ground and not on you.

When you are on forest roads remember that you are generally on someone else's lands. The general rule is to leave gates as you find them. If gates are open when you arrive, leave them open. If they are locked you should lock them after you pass through. A good habit to get into is to leave a note in the lock box indicating to others that you are somewhere on the roads inside the gates. A better option is to place a metal tag out on the gate lock that has your name and phone number on it. This indicates to others that you are still inside the area.