



avement edge drop-off is a common safety hazard, especially if the difference in height between the pavement and the adjacent surface is 2 inches or more. Drop-offs can result from broken pavement, erosion of an unpaved shoulder, inadequate maintenance, or when a travel lane is resurfaced but the shoulder is not.

You may be caught by surprise... suddenly you feel one or two of your tires drop off the pavement.

If you do drive off the pavement and do not know the recommended recovery technique, you could lose control of your vehicle and crash into a tree or other object alongside the road, crash into another vehicle on the road, or even roll over.

Although relatively infrequent compared to other types of crashes, pavement edge drop-off crashes are over twice as likely to be fatal relative to other crashes on similar roads.

What to do if you drive off the pavement edge

In summary

Stay calm. Do not try to steer back onto the road immediately. Steer straight and slow down gradually. If it's safe, drive all the way onto the shoulder. Wait until there is a gap in traffic, and then drive back onto the road safely.



If you can't get back onto the road

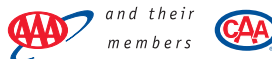
Drive as far off the road as you can safely. Gradually come to a stop, and call for help.

Over the Edge and Back

What to do if you drive off the pavement edge



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What to do if you drive off the pavement edge

You may drive off the road or be forced off the road for any number of reasons, so it's good to know what to do—and what not to—if it happens. It's not about returning to the road quickly, it's about returning to the road safely. Follow these steps:

If the shoulder is wide enough and your path is clear

Continue to look at the road ahead. Drive all the way onto the shoulder. Gradually stop and “collect yourself.” Wait for a large gap in traffic, and then drive back onto the road.

If you can't drive all the way onto the shoulder and stop

Continue to look and steer straight ahead. Do not try to steer back onto the road immediately—this can cause you to lose control of your vehicle and crash.

First, if you're driving at high speed and

you suddenly steer sharply, you may accidentally drive into oncoming traffic.

Second, if your tires are close to the pavement edge and you attempt to drive back onto the road, they may “scrub” against the pavement edge making it very difficult to drive back onto the road. If you do drive back with your tires scrubbing, you may lose control and crash into another vehicle or into something on the side of the road.

If there are no obstacles directly in front of you

Steer to “straddle” the pavement edge. Move the tires that are off the road away from the pavement edge, and then steer parallel to it. This will prevent your tires from scrubbing. Most importantly, continue to look at the road ahead.

Do not slam on the brakes!

Ease off the gas pedal. If you need to brake, brake very gently. If you brake hard while your tires are on different surfaces, this can cause your vehicle to skid.

Slow down gradually

Slowing down will help you get back onto the road without losing control. If there are no obstacles in front of you, slow down to 25 mph or less before mounting the pavement.



Take some time to “calm down”

If you have room, drive all the way off the road and as far onto the shoulder as possible to stop.

Wait until it's safe

After you've slowed down or stopped, wait until there is a gap in traffic. Do not try to drive back onto the road if there is traffic in your lane, an adjacent lane, or any oncoming traffic.

When the road is “all clear,” turn the steering wheel about one-quarter turn to the left. Drive back onto the pavement. When all of your tires are on the pavement, steer back to the right to stay in your lane.



SCRUBBING: If you drive too close to the pavement edge, tire scrubbing will make it difficult to return to the road.



STRADDLING: Steer to straddle the pavement edge, moving the car slightly away from the pavement edge.



QUARTER TURN: Turn the steering wheel about one-quarter turn to the left and drive back onto the pavement.