

DID YOU KNOW???

WHY DO SO MANY DRIVERS FAIL TO USE HEADLIGHTS?

As you might expect, I get many emails about driver's pet peeves and occasionally even a letter that I received from a reader in Saranac Lake who had a boatload of gripes about drivers, most of which I have addressed in past articles, some many times. This person's biggest gripe, one that I share with him, is about drivers that fail to use their headlights at dawn and dusk, and in bad weather, not to be able to see but to be able to be seen. To the writer and to me, failure to use headlights is probably the most important issue.

If I may editorialize a minute, I blame drivers that don't realize how difficult it is to be seen by other drivers unless they have their lights on (not just daytime running lights but full headlights and tail lights), but I also blame the Federal Government for failure to act on solving this problem. Why does the United States still refuse to mandate that all vehicles sold in the US after a certain date be equipped with daytime running lights (DRLs)? To the best of my knowledge, all European countries, Canada, and most developed nations have done so years if not decades ago. With annual fatalities in the US running around 35,000 and rising, how many of these deaths could have been prevented just by having all vehicles displaying at least running lights at all times. Is there not a reason trains have had headlights on at all times for likely 100 years? How about school buses, where state law mandates full headlights at all times. Is there not a lesson here?

The letter writer makes a point that "some drivers don't know the law, some don't care, and the rest don't know the difference between headlights and DRLs." He continues that some drivers are uneducated, some can't think critically, and many are just plain stupid. Strong words, perhaps, but most of what he says makes sense, whether it hits home or just enforces your own opinions on this subject. In fact, because of the reality of what he is saying, isn't that a compelling reason for the Federal Government to mandate DRLs?

Looking back in my index of "Did You Know" articles, I have written at least ten times on the importance of using headlights during poor visibility. Every time we have fog, snow, rain, or just dull, gray skies, I am flabbergasted by the number of drivers going merrily about their way with no lights, oblivious to the fact that their vehicle is more difficult for other drivers to see. When visibility is poor, it is almost an impossibility to pass another vehicle for fear that you'll meet an oncoming vehicle with no lights on.

In closing, take a good look at yourself as a driver. Would you fall into one of the categories of the letter writer? Do you know the laws? Do you realize the importance of lights? If you don't measure up, perhaps you should change your outlook – it could mean the difference between your life and your death!

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