The danger of driving in the dust

The dust created by vehicles can sometimes make you lose all visibility on the PDR. This is especially high risk during the afternoon sun glare.

There are some measures you can take to reduce the risk of driving in the dust:

• In a high glare afternoon, don’t drive until the sun is below the horizon.
• Always drive with your headlights on low beam during the day.
• If an oncoming vehicle approaches and you cannot see through the dust, slow down and gradually move off the road until the dust settles.
• When following another vehicle leave a gap so you are not driving in its dust cloud.
• Try to maintain 200 metres of clear vision behind other vehicles.

Be aware of wildlife

Animals such as cattle, horses, kangaroos and wallabies are a common sight on the PDR, particularly early in the morning and late in the evening.

If you see an animal crossing the road:

• Brake softly and progressively increase the brake pedal pressure.
• If the vehicle skids, keep the steering wheel straight.
• Ease breaking pressure.
• Never swerve to avoid an animal.

Seasonal vehicle restrictions

The PDR can be subject to load limits in the wet season.

A load limit is a vehicle restriction implemented for safety reasons and to prevent road damage when the road qualifies as "saturated".

If a load limit is in place, Transport and Main Roads considers applications for vehicles greater than 5 tonnes on a case-by-case basis. Call Transport and Main Roads’ Traffic Management Centre (Far North) to start your application process: (07) 4045 7244.

Every year on the Peninsula Developmental Road (PDR) incidents and crashes happen because people don’t drive to conditions.

What does ‘drive to conditions’ mean?

Driving to conditions means you are driving in response to your environment and what’s happening around you at every moment.

About the PDR

• 570km long (including the Rio Tinto mine lease)
• includes a number of unsealed sections over 300km
• stretches from Lakeland to Weipa
• it’s the main transport link on Cape York.

Top ‘drive to conditions’ tips for the PDR

1. Don’t cross flooded waterways.
2. Check conditions prior to your trip by calling 13 19 40.
3. It’s best to keep headlights on all the time on the PDR. Particularly on unsealed sections — even during daylight.
4. Allow 200 metres of clear vision behind the vehicle ahead of you on dust affected roads.
5. Always use Four Wheel Drive (4WD) and High Range (4H) on unsealed sections.
6. Don’t drive towards oncoming road work machinery.
Put ‘driving to conditions’ before speed

The road conditions should dictate what speed you travel on the PDR. The maximum legal speed limit on sections of the PDR is 100 km/h. This does not mean you need to drive at that speed.

Assessing the conditions is key to ensuring the speed you travel is safe for you and your passengers.

Driving conditions can be affected by:
- weather
- vehicle
- experience in driving in the conditions
- time of day
- road surface
- volume and type of traffic on the road.

Driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol

Police intercept a high volume of drivers driving under the influence on the PDR. Sometimes drivers under the influence can account for 100 per cent of police interactions.

Police take a zero tolerance approach to drug and drink driving and have the resources to detect and apprehend offenders on the spot.

Drug and drink driving can result in an offenders on the spot.

Drinking and driving can result in an instant. The moment you drive into floodwater is the moment you give up control.

Put ‘driving to conditions’ before speed

If it’s flooded, forget it

Every wet season the PDR experiences heavy rain and flooding at river crossings. Even in the dry season, storms can cause a rapid rise in waterways along the PDR. Flood conditions can change in an instant. The moment you drive into floodwater is the moment you give up control.

The only way to stay safe is to stay out of floodwater. The best way to avoid the water is to get yourself a Plan B.

In 2014 and 2015 in flooded crossings on the PDR:
- 5 cars washed off
- 1 fatality
- 3 near misses

The flooded Roads Map uses real-time data and user reports to give you a picture of the flood risk for your journey, helping you plan ahead: http://floodwatersafety.initiatives.qld.gov.au/flooded-roads-map

You can also call the statewide Traffic and Road Condition reporting service:

Call 13 19 40
Transport and Main Roads road condition reports.

Negotiating corners and dips

There are many corners and dips on the PDR that have proved to be catastrophic when motorists approach with too much speed.
- reduce speed when negotiating corners or dips
- be aware of loose gravel.

Driving on an unsealed road

Great progress has been made in the last two years to increase the amount of bitumen seal on the PDR, through the delivery of the Cape York Region Package.

However, more than 300km of the road remains unsealed, with the condition varying between:
- mud
- sand
- fine dust (bulldust)
- gravel
- corrugations.

It is strongly recommended a 4WD is used to travel on the PDR.

What do I do if I see a grader working on the road?

It is likely you will see a grader carrying out maintenance on the PDR during the dry season.

DO
- wait until you can follow the grader at a safe distance through the work area
- be aware of signage and traffic controllers
- pull over to let the grader pass.

DON’T
- continue on the road if a grader is coming towards you
- overtake the grader.

Avoid ‘spinning out’

“The majority of crashes on the PDR are single vehicle crashes where vehicles spin out and the driver loses control. Here’s some things you can do to avoid this happening:
- Enter bends and turns at an appropriate speed.
- If your vehicle begins to spin or spin out, do not brake.
- Release the brake if you have already applied it.
- Keep your steering wheel straight. Don’t try to steer out of a slide or spin.

Tips from travellers

"When catching up to a vehicle in front of you, drop back a bit so you’re not travelling in its dust."

"Travel with your lights on in the dust, night and day!"

“Slow down around bends, even if it doesn’t look that tight. A little bit of uneven surface on a corner can make you spin out.”

“Have a radio in your car! We used channel 40 to warn approaching vehicles about dust holes and so on. The friendly chatter keeps you alert as well!”

Encountering grader roadworks on the PDR

A five year program of sealing works, being funded through the Cape York Region Package, commenced in 2014. An additional 110.1km of seal will be on the PDR by end of 2016.

For information about this project, please visit: www.tmr.qld.gov.au/Projects/Name/C/Cape-York-Region-Package-Peninsula-Developmental-Road.aspx