

Driving the Peninsula Developmental Road

2016

Tips for driving in dusty conditions



Slow down when you see a heavy vehicle approaching



Move to the left-hand side of the road to allow plenty of room



If necessary, pull over to the side of the road until the dust clears

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.



Driver on the PDR



Cattle are a common sight on the PDR

For Cape York Region Package updates and enquiries:

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Post: PO Box 6185, Cairns, Queensland, 4870

* Free call from anywhere in Australia, call charges apply for mobile phones and payphones. Check with your service provider for call costs.

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 100km/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 in a 24 hour period:

- Queensland traffic laws apply on the PDR and police officers patrol this road all hours of the day and night.
- 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 instant loss of licence for a minimum of a 24hr period.



Police Roadside Breath Test near Coen on the PDR: Photo courtesy of Queensland Police.

Forget how calm the surface looks
Forget it if the car before you made it through
Forget it if you made it through before

If it’s flooded, forget it

Risky behaviour: Cars attempting to cross a flooded waterway on the PDR.



FORGET HOW WELL YOU KNOW THE ROAD

Always have a Plan B.

www.qld.gov.au/floodwatersafety



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 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 (bull dust)
- gravel
- corrugations.

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



4WD motorists resting at Hann Roadhouse on the PDR.

Use 4WD High Range

Engage 4WD High Range (4H) the moment you leave bitumen to drive onto an unsealed section. This will increase your safety through:

- enhanced tyre grip
- improved vehicle stability
- improved braking
- reduced skidding.

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."

"We travelled in a group of four vehicles. We found UHF radios very useful."



Encountering grader roadworks 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.

When is the PDR at peak condition?

When the wet season is finished, Transport and Main Roads carries out full maintenance grading of the gravel sections of the PDR. This full maintenance grade usually takes around seven to eight weeks to complete, and usually occurs between April and June. The unsealed sections of the PDR are in their best condition following this grade.

A five year program of sealing works, being funded through the Cape York Region Package, commenced in 2014. An additional 130.1km 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.

Avoid ‘spinning out’

"Is it safe to overtake?"
"Can I see through the dust?"

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 slide 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.

"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!"

"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."