

Road Rally 102 – Let's Play Safe

By Scott Harvey

In *Road Rally 101* rule number one is about having fun. In order to have fun and keep it at a satisfactory level – the game also has to be safe. This document will talk about safety as it relates to Road Rallies. There is no way to cover all eventualities and there is no way to predict when and where unsafe situations may present themselves. The following basic concepts are only a guide – they should be considered the minimum of what to watch out for. With anything else – common sense and exercising safe practices should always be followed.

- Road Rallies are run on **public roads**. All the rules of the road apply at all times to the competitors. There is no suspension of traffic laws (or the laws of physics) just because you are competing in a Road Rally.
- There are **other people using the roads**. They may be going to the grocery store or heading home from a party. Be courteous and polite to all “civilian” traffic. They have as much right to the roads as you do.
- The rally route will sometimes pass by homes, farms and other residences. It is in your best interest and the best interest of the future of rallying to exercise restraint when **passing through populated areas**. Sliding sideways, kicking up gravel and making a lot of noise is a sure way to alert local residents to your presence. It's also a good way to get the local sheriff out looking for “people doing stupid things” on the roads. You should try to keep your speed at a reasonable level and draw as little attention to your activities as possible. In most cases – there is little chance of a checkpoint in populated areas anyway. You should not be acting in a way that might make the locals mad. As it is, there seem to be plenty of residents who think that they *own* the road that they live on and resent the fact that anyone else should be using *their* road. Please be polite even to these poor disillusioned folks.
- All Road Rallies are governed by a set of **safety regulations**. These regulations cover everything from allowable speeds to avoiding unsafe situations. One such rule is that the speed for any stretch of road may not exceed the posted speed limit. For example, if a section of the rally route goes through a town where the posted speed limit is 25 mph – the speed in the route instructions must be at or below this speed. There are many instances where a speed may not be specifically assigned to a given section of the route. In cases such as this – there must be provision to allow the competitors safe passage through these areas with ample time so that all speed limits and stops are properly observed. (See Transit and Free Zone in later sections).
- There are many other variables involved in determining **safe speeds**. There are road conditions and weather conditions to be considered when the Rallymaster decides what speed to assign a given stretch of road. Is the road very twisty and hilly? Is it likely to be covered with snow or ice? What if it rains and the road gets very slippery? All of these factors need to be considered by the Rallymaster (and the Rally Safety Steward). There is also the competitor who must decide if their skill level, their vehicle's capabilities or the prevailing road conditions are putting them in a state of discomfort. It is always best to understand when any of these limitations are starting to come into play and take the appropriate action. Fortunately, there is a mechanism in place to allow for the competitors to slow down and stay within their “comfort zone”. This mechanism is called a **Time Allowance (or Bought Time)**. Look for a detailed explanation of this later on.
- Provisions must also be made to cover traffic lights, stop signs and other obstacles to traffic flow. One of the best tools for this is something called a **Pause**. A Pause is essentially a “suspension of time”. In theory – it allows you to stop and get back up to speed in a safe and controlled manner. For example, a 0.10 minute Pause (equal to 6 seconds) is usually a good

amount of time for a stop sign at an intersection that will see very light traffic during the time of the rally. A Pause of 0.25 minutes (15 seconds) might be used for an intersection with possible moderate traffic. 2.00 minutes might be used for a traffic light.

- There are places where you will be expected to stop and verify or reset your mileage. These are typically called **out markers**. The start of the rally is typically such a place and the end of the odometer calibration zone is another. When it becomes necessary to stop at these locations – do so in a safe and careful manner. **Do not park in the middle of the road.** Always yield to following traffic by turning on your four-way flashers and moving well off to the right side of the road as you slow to a stop. At the same time – don't linger too long at these out markers. The other competitors behind you will also need to use the same piece of real estate to set their mileage as well.
- At all **checkpoints** where the competitors are expected to stop – there is an increased risk to safety. There will usually be one or more competitors out of their vehicle walking to or from the control vehicle. There will usually be one or more cars either parked on the side of the road or just leaving or entering the area. Always be very careful in the areas of checkpoints and watch out for others. This goes both ways – don't assume the driver of the incoming car sees you. Always make sure you are not in a dangerous location when the next car does arrive or when the previous car departs.
- **Common sense.** Always use common sense when it comes to your actions. If for some reason you get off-course and want to get back on time – do the right thing. Do not speed to get back on-time. Use a Time Allowance. If a local who is driving slowly holds you up – pass only if a safe and proper opportunity presents itself. If there is no safe opportunity to do so – take a Time Allowance. If the road conditions are too slippery for your vehicle to negotiate the turns safely at the prescribed rally speed – take a Time Allowance. There is no shame in buying time to stay safe. In fact, the value of the trophies at any rally I have ever run are worth far less than the cost of repairing body damage or even worse – human bodily injury.
- **Time Allowance.** By now you might have noticed this thing called “Time Allowance”. What is this magical “get out of jail free” card? At all rallies sanctioned by the SCCA there is a provision for T/As (Time Allowance). There will usually be a sheet of time allowance slips in your information packet. At the time when you need to use a T/A, you should fill in the NRI where your need for the T/A occurred. Then provide a brief description of why you need to use the T/A. “Got lost”, “stuck behind local”, “slippery roads”, etc. are all common reasons for the need of a T/A. Include your car number and sign the slip. [Tip: Fill out a few T/A slips before the start of the rally with your car number and your signature and have them handy for the time when you need to fill one out for real]. You must list the amount of time you need to get yourself back close to on-time. This is usually on the 0.50 (half minute) and in one-minute increments. In other words, 0.50, 1.50, 2.50, ... 19.50 are the generally accepted amounts allowed for T/As. The reason for them being on the half minute (0.50) is to avoid dropping back to the same minute as one of the following competitors. By going on the half minute – ideally, you fall exactly between two competitors (who should all be (ideally) separated by one whole minute). When you get to the next checkpoint – you will need to give this completed T/A slip to the control crew and tell them verbally how much time you are requesting. This amount will be subtracted from the time it actually took for you to get to that particular checkpoint when it comes time to calculate your score for that leg (checkpoint).

So let's all play safe. We're in this for the fun. If you crash your car or worse, someone gets hurt – the fun goes right out the door.