Stay safe after a breakdown with these 7 roadside safety tips.

Whatever the reason – a flat tire, dying battery or overheated engine – it's no fun to be sidelined by a breakdown on the road. These roadside safety tips will help keep you safe until you're able to get back on the road.

1. Put on your hazard lights. As soon as you realize you're having car trouble, immediately put on your hazard lights. This will alert drivers behind you, so they won't be surprised when you slow down or pull over to the side of the road.

2. Pull over if possible. If your car is still functioning well enough to get you to the side of the road (or even better, to a nearby parking lot), pull over to get out of traffic and reduce the risk of a collision.

3. Make yourself visible. Keep your hazard lights on, and if you have reflective emergency triangles, set them around your car. However, do not exit the car if it isn't safe to do so (for instance, if you are still in the road). If you are on the side of the road, exit the car from the side furthest away from traffic.

4. Stay in your car. Once you have placed any available markers around your car, get back inside and call a roadside assistance service or 911. Let them know you are stranded and ask them how long it will take to get to you. If phone service is not available, try texting 911 — police departments across the U.S. have implemented Text-to-911 service in many areas.

5. Don't run your engine continuously. If it's cold outside, intermittently run the engine for 10-15 minutes at a time to keep warm. If you're stranded in wintry weather, your exhaust pipe can get clogged with snow and/or ice; if it does, running your engine continuously could result in carbon monoxide

poisoning. Intermittently running your engine also saves fuel.

6. Don’t DIY. Unless you have plenty of experience with auto repairs and have adequate room away from traffic, it’s best to wait for the pros to come help you. Many roadside injuries occur during repair attempts gone wrong.

7. Be prepared. A little preparation could save you a lot of trouble in a roadside emergency. Keep your car stocked with the following items:

- Phone charger and power bank
- First-aid kit
- Reflective emergency triangles or road flares
- Flashlight (in case of a breakdown at night)
- Blanket
- Nonperishable snacks (granola bars, trail mix, etc.)
- Water
- Auto emergency kit (including jumper cables, lug wrench and jack for experienced users)

As an additional precaution, always let someone know where you are going and the route you’ll be taking. Having an auto insurance policy with coverage for roadside assistance can give you a little extra peace of mind, too. Contact a local independent agent to find the right auto policy for you.