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Drivers Can — and Should — Prepare for the Worst with Pennsylvania's New Yellow Dot Program

It may sound crazy, but a yellow dot could save your life.

This relatively simple idea — part of a nationwide public safety effort that Pennsylvania recently joined — has proven to be an effective way for drivers injured in an accident to relay important information to emergency response teams.

All you have to do is place a special yellow sticker in the bottom left corner of your vehicle's rear window. This alerts first responders to check the glove compartment for, among other things, your emergency contact information, medical history, and a list of medications.

And, best of all, it's free to participate.

'The best thing I've ever seen'

First initiated in Connecticut in 2002, the Yellow Dot Program has given a voice to people in life-threatening situations.

The initiative, however, is not only valuable to those in serious accidents who are unable to respond to emergency workers. It's also a vital tool in less serious accidents when victims are in shock and may have difficulty remembering things.

"This program speaks for people when they can't speak for themselves so medical concerns



Pennsylvanians are being encouraged to place yellow dots similar to the one above in their vehicle's rear window. When an accident occurs, this alerts first responders that you have placed important medical information in your glove box — a move that could literally save your life.

can be addressed and contacts can be reached as quickly as possible," Gov. Tom Corbett said recently.

For instance, when an 87-year-old man was involved in a serious accident soon after placing a yellow dot and medical information in his truck, first responders were able to quickly alert his family as he was being airlifted to the hospital.

“When we went back to see him,” a family member recalls, “the nurse held up the Yellow Dot folder and said, ‘Where did you get this?’ I told her, and she said, ‘This is the best thing I’ve ever seen.’”

Where to get a kit

Pennsylvania’s Yellow Dot kits are available from a number of sources, including:

- online at www.YellowDot.pa.gov (click on the “How can I participate in Yellow Dot?” link);
- at one of Pennsylvania’s 52 Area Agencies on Aging; and

- at Regional EMS/County Health Centers. [Call (877)-PA-HEALTH (877-724-3258) to find the nearest center.]

The kit includes a yellow dot decal, which you should put in your vehicle’s rear window.

Participants also need to complete a personal information form that asks for such things as your name, address and phone number, emergency contact information, medical history, medications, and hospital preference. The document, along with your photo, should then be placed in your glove box. ♦

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Note: The Yellow Dot Program is a cooperative effort among the state departments of Transportation, Health, and Aging, the Pennsylvania State Police, the Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission, first responders, and local law enforcement.

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Are you ready for any emergency?

After a major disaster, the usual services we take for granted, such as running water, refrigeration, and telephones, may be unavailable.

Experts say you should be prepared to be self-sufficient for at least three days with a household disaster kit. The contents should be stored in a large, watertight container that is easy to access and move, such as a large plastic garbage can with a lid and wheels.

Your basic emergency kit should include:

- Water – one gallon per person per day
- Food – ready to eat or requiring minimal water
- Manual can opener and other cooking supplies
- Plates, utensils, and other feeding supplies
- First Aid kit and instructions
- A copy of important documents and phone numbers
- Warm clothes and rain gear for each family member
- Heavy work gloves
- Disposable camera
- Personal hygiene items, toilet paper, and soap
- Plastic sheeting, duct tape, and utility knife
- Tools, such as a crowbar, hammer and nails, staple gun, adjustable wrench, and bungee cords
- Blanket or sleeping bag
- Large heavy-duty plastic bags and a plastic bucket for waste and sanitation
- Water and supplies for pets

A component of your disaster kit is your “go-bag,” which is a backpack or other easy-to-carry container that you can grab quickly if evacuated. One go-bag should be prepared for each family member. Be sure to attach an I.D. tag to each bag and include the following:

- Flashlight
- Battery-operated radio
- Batteries
- Whistle
- Dust mask
- Pocket knife
- Emergency cash
- Sturdy shoes, a change of clothes, and a warm hat
- Local map
- Permanent marker, paper, and tape
- Photos of family members and pets
- List of emergency phone numbers
- Copy of health insurance and ID cards
- Extra eye glasses, hearing aids, and other vital personal items
- Prescription medications and first aid supplies
- Toothbrush and toothpaste
- Extra keys to your house and vehicle