

Sudden Braking on National Highways Amounts to Negligence, Rules Supreme Court



In a significant ruling, the Supreme Court of India declared that suddenly applying brakes on National Highways (NH) constitutes negligence, particularly when it leads to accidents. The court's ruling comes in the context of a case involving a tragic road mishap, in which the driver of a vehicle was found to have acted negligently by applying sudden brakes on a busy highway.

The judgment, delivered earlier this week, emphasized that drivers must exercise caution and foresight while operating vehicles on major roadways, especially on high-speed corridors such as National Highways. Justice Sanjay Kishan Kaul, heading the bench, stated that applying brakes abruptly without a valid reason is a breach of road safety protocols, which can endanger both the driver and other road users.

The case under review involved a fatal accident that occurred when a vehicle's driver unexpectedly applied brakes on a national highway, leading to a pile-up involving multiple vehicles. The court took into account the severity of the accident, noting that such actions violate the principle of road safety and proper traffic management. Justice Kaul remarked, "On highways where speeds are high, sudden braking without cause amounts to negligence and can be catastrophic."

National Highways, which are vital for transportation across India, often see heavy traffic flows and fast-moving vehicles. Sudden braking on these roads has been identified as a common cause of accidents, especially during peak hours or in congested areas. Traffic safety experts have long warned that such behavior can lead to chain collisions, posing risks to both private

and commercial vehicles. The Supreme Court's ruling reinforces the importance of maintaining steady driving speeds and adhering to proper traffic signals, particularly on high-speed routes.

The Court further highlighted that drivers must ensure that they apply brakes only when absolutely necessary, such as in the case of emergencies, and should always maintain an adequate distance from the vehicle in front to avoid sudden disruptions. The ruling also stressed that authorities must take steps to ensure that road signs and traffic signals are clearly visible and enforceable.

Experts in road safety believe this judgment could prompt stronger regulations around driving behavior on National Highways, including better monitoring and the introduction of stricter penalties for erratic driving. As the ruling gains traction, it could lead to broader reforms aimed at improving highway safety standards.

The Supreme Court's decision serves as a reminder of the pressing need for drivers to maintain responsibility on India's National Highways. It also sets a benchmark for future rulings in road safety cases.