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## Autumn Driving Can Be Challenging

Cooler temperatures, vivid foliage, and shorter days signal the arrival of autumn, a season that challenges drivers in unique ways.

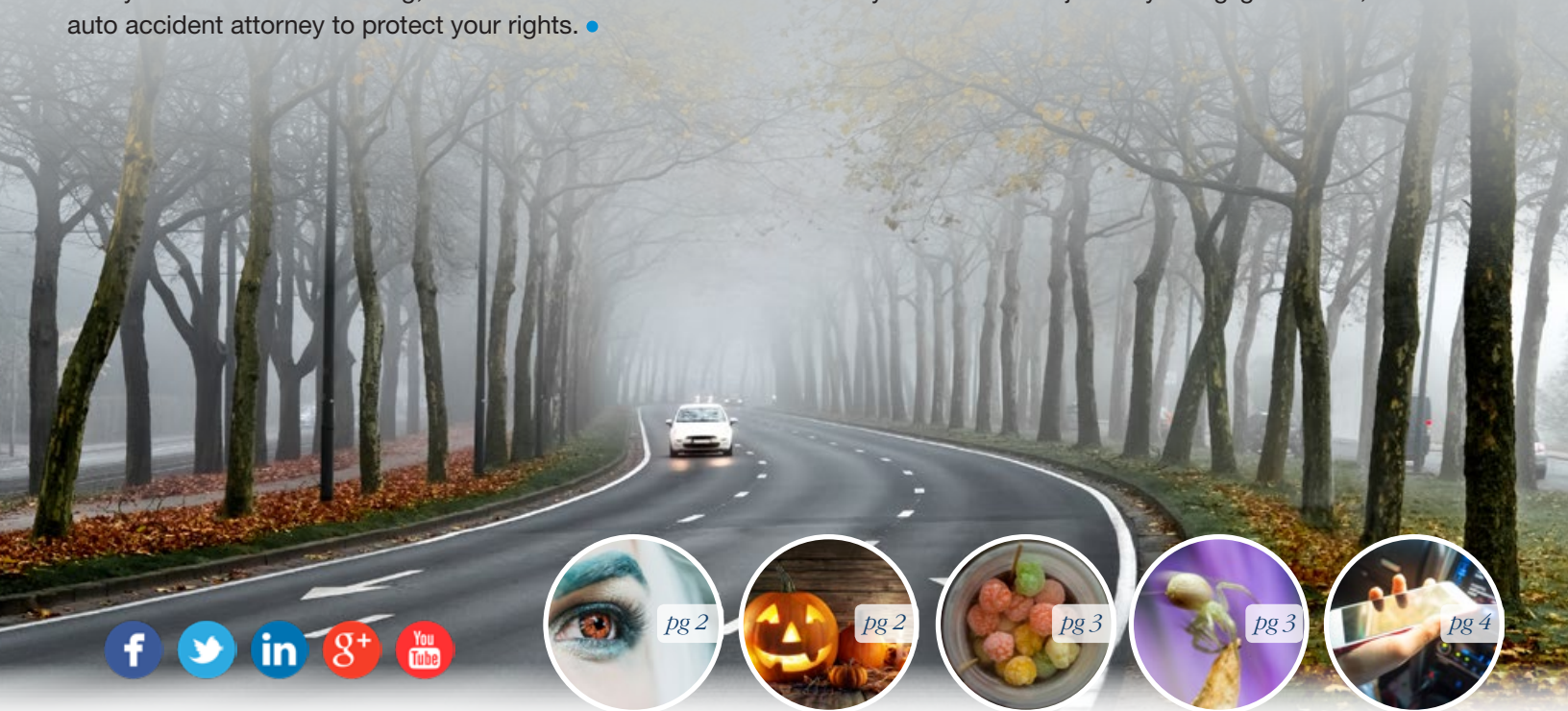
Fall weather can be unpredictable. In many areas of the country, sun, rain, fog, frost, ice, and snow are all part of the mix. Diminishing daylight equates to more nighttime driving and associated visibility issues. Fallen leaves can obscure traffic markings and hide potholes. Wet leaves can be as slick as ice.

During fall and winter, the sun is naturally lower in the sky than in the spring and summer, creating a lower angle of reflection that leads to blinding glare. Driving can be downright treacherous. The effect is most intense 15–45 minutes after sunrise and before sunset. It can strike from behind, too, reflecting off rear view mirrors and upcoming traffic lights.

Autumn also marks a rise in deer-vehicle incidents. Increased deer activity in the fall is due to breeding season. Males become bolder and less attentive, persistently seeking mates over a wider territory. If the females aren't ready to breed, they'll do whatever they can to get away. Both situations mean an increased frequency of road crossings. Hunting season stirs the pot as well.

If a deer suddenly crosses your path, brake—don't swerve—to maintain control of your car. If you see one deer, be on the lookout for more; they travel in groups.

Reduced speed, awareness of your surroundings, a good pair of sunglasses, and proper vehicle maintenance are excellent safety measures for fall driving, but other drivers need to follow suit. If you have been injured by a negligent driver, contact an auto accident attorney to protect your rights. •





# Decorative Contact Lenses . . . Play It Safe

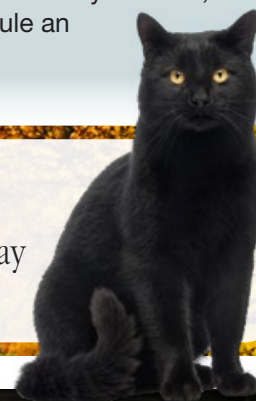
Decorative contact lenses can change the color of one's eyes, create an effect, or issue a statement. People use them to complement Halloween costumes and support their favorite sports teams, among other reasons.

All contact lenses—whether they're used for vision correction or not—are classified as medical devices by the Food and Drug Administration. They are not "cosmetic." They require a comprehensive exam and valid prescription from an eye-care professional since they rest on a person's corneas (the front surface of the eye). Because everyone's corneas are uniquely shaped, all contact lenses must be precisely fitted for each patient. They are not one-size-fits-all.

Contacts that don't fit correctly can scratch the cornea, deprive it of oxygen, lead to infection, and result in permanent vision loss. Some people have lost their sight in less than 24 hours. Signs of possible eye infection include redness, discomfort, and impaired vision. Contacts can cause allergic reactions as well.

**Never purchase decorative contacts from any seller that does not ask for your prescription.** Sellers are also required by law to verify your prescription with your eye doctor. Decorative contacts are often sold illegally at novelty stores, flea markets, beauty-supply stores, Halloween shops, convenience stores, beach shops, and on various online sites.

Decorative contacts need to be cleaned and stored as instructed by your eye doctor. Never share them with anyone else, and do not wear them overnight without doctor approval. If you would like to try decorative contacts, schedule an appointment with an eye doctor. If that seems like a hassle, just consider the possible consequences. ●



## October 2018 Notable Dates

October 1 – Child Health Day    October 8 – Columbus Day    October 16 – Boss's Day  
October 29 – National Cat Day    October 31 – Halloween

## Did You Know? . . .

One theory on the origin of jack-o'-lanterns is tied to an Irish folktale and a man named "Stingy Jack." Long story short, Jack bartered with the devil over a bar bill, tricked the devil, and negotiated soul-claiming exemptions.

After Jack died, his unsavory qualities disqualified him from heaven, and the devil barred him from hell (wounded pride). The devil told Jack to head back to where he came from and tossed him one of hell's embers to light his way. Jack placed it in a large, hollowed-out turnip, a favorite food he always kept on hand. He became known as "Jack of the lantern."

Irish immigrants brought this folktale and tradition to the United States. America's plentiful pumpkins became the preferred canvas for jack-o'-lanterns, replacing the large turnips and potatoes of Ireland. ●



# Beware of ‘Dragon’s Breath’

By Rhododendrites - Own work, CC BY-SA 4.0, commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/index.php?curid=66546457



Liquid nitrogen is a wonderful substance used to great advantage by scientists and medical professionals. It’s also a tool utilized by chefs to flash-freeze certain food products, enhance textures, and create dramatic effects. However, when used incorrectly, it can cause serious harm.

At fairs, amusement parks, shopping malls, and other venues around the world, liquid nitrogen is a key component of a trendy dessert item called “Dragon’s Breath.” Bright, colorful cereal puffs are coated with liquid nitrogen. Nitrogen has a boiling point of  $-320^{\circ}\text{F}$ , so in liquid form it’s really cold. When the frozen puffs are consumed, condensation in the mouth produces “smoke” that is breathed out—hence the name Dragon’s Breath. It’s no wonder that kids (and adults) find the dessert fascinating and fun.

Here’s the dangerous downside. Although liquid nitrogen evaporates quickly when exposed to air, some residue may remain in a dish or cup in which the treat was served. Touching it can severely burn your skin. If any residue was present in or on the cereal puffs, it can be destructive to tissues in the mouth, esophagus, and digestive tract. In some circumstances, the stomach may fill with gas, inflate like a balloon, and possibly burst.

There have been various reports of people undergoing emergency surgery after having eaten Dragon’s Breath. Even slight irritation of a person’s airway could spell big trouble if they suffer from asthma.

In many cases, simply waiting several minutes after liquid nitrogen is applied before eating would be enough time for it to fully evaporate. Bottom line, the use of liquid nitrogen is best left to professionals. ●

## Spiders Get Around

Spiders might be wingless, but many of them still take flight. Spiders have been observed descending from the sky onto the decks of ships hundreds of miles from shore. They’ve also been encountered thousands of feet in the air and have been some of the first creatures to arrive on brand-new volcanic islands.

“Ballooning” is their method of travel. Spiders climb to an elevated point, expose their abdomens to the heavens, spin strands of silk that are seemingly caught by the wind, and away they go. Ballooning assists spiders in evading predators and discovering new environments with more abundant resources.

But scientists have never been satisfied with the wind theory, since some ballooning spiders seem too large for solely the wind to carry them. In addition, ballooning can occur without wind, and spider takeoff acceleration far exceeds wind speed.

University of Bristol (U.K.) researchers believe that spiders can sense the earth’s electric field and utilize it to launch themselves. The earth’s atmosphere is a crackling electric circuit—as roughly 40,000 daily thunderstorms attest. The atmosphere has a positive charge; the earth’s surface, negative.

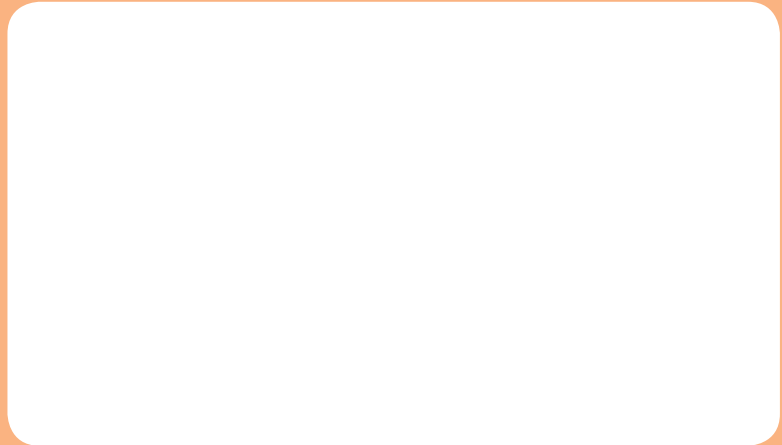
Silk that exits a spider’s body picks up a negative charge that repels the negative charge of the earth’s surface, creating enough force to lift the spider into the air. The force is magnified with every inch of elevation, so spiders often climb onto twigs, leaves, or blades of grass before ballooning. Their silk splays out in a fan shape, and they ride the electrical currents like they own them.

This discovery is important to understanding species distribution, population dynamics, and ecological resiliency. The bad news? For arachnophobes, there truly is no escape. ●





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## Teenage Texting and Driving

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of fatalities for U.S. teens. Drivers who are 16–19 years of age are over three times as likely as someone age 20 or older to be involved in a fatal crash. A major contributor to this negative news is distracted driving.

Distracted driving is an increasingly serious problem for all age groups, but it's even more prevalent among teens. Distractions come in three major forms: **manual**, taking your hands off the wheel; **cognitive**, taking your mind off the task of driving; and **visual**, taking your eyes off the road.

Although there are many driving distractions, the worst is texting while driving. It involves the trifecta of dangerous distractions: manual, cognitive, and visual. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration studies have found that teens who text while driving are 23 times more at risk of a crash than those who don't—making it worse than driving drunk.

Teens already lack road experience, are more likely to speed than other age groups, frequently opt to not wear their seatbelts, and are more susceptible to peer pressure. Texting while driving makes an already concerning situation a disaster waiting to happen.

Numerous state legislatures have made it a punishable offense to talk on a cell phone or text while driving. Parents can help the situation by setting a good example. Seventy-seven percent of teens who said their parents talked to them about the hazards of texting and driving also reported that they had witnessed their parents doing the same thing. ●

