

Use common sense, these tips when navigating roundabouts

“Roundabouts!” We have an abundance of them throughout the community. While they sometimes cause angst for residents and guests, it often is because they are not familiar with the unique aspects of roundabouts.

I would like to take the opportunity to outline the appropriate way to navigate the roundabouts and the great benefits they provide to the community.

Roundabouts (also referred to as “traffic circles” or “rotaries”) are great traffic control structures. They statistically are safer than other intersections. They require about the same amount of space as four-way intersection, but have many advantages over that alternative.

Roundabouts slow all traffic through the intersection. Reduced speeds mean drivers are able to evade other vehicles easily and if accidents do occur, they often are not as severe as accidents in intersections.

Traffic continues to move through roundabouts resulting in reduced driving delays, fuel savings and less pollution. They also have the unique ability to allow drivers to reverse their direction (essentially performing a U-turn) in a safe manner.

The basic operating principles in roundabouts are rather simple. Drivers wanting to enter yield to drivers already in the roundabout, and once you enter the roundabout, you stay in your lane until you are ready to exit.

So what’s the problem? Let’s break down a trip through the roundabout and figure this out.

Prepare yourself for a roundabout. Concentrate on where you want to go and what challenges you may encounter. This means you should get off the cellphone and turn down the radio well in



**SCOTT
WILDER**
COLUMNIST

advance of the roundabout.

Think about where you want to exit the roundabout. That will determine which lane you want to get in as you enter the roundabout, which will dictate the specific lane you should position yourself in before arriving at the roundabout.

Position your vehicle in the right lane of the approaching road if you are planning on exiting the roundabout at the first or second road to your right. Slow to 20 mph as you approach the roundabout.

Look to your left as you approach the roundabout and yield to vehicles approaching you in the outer lane. Blend into traffic in the outer lane of the roundabout. Use your right turn signal to let other drivers know when you are exiting the roundabout.

All of this is actually rather simple if you are planning on exiting at the first road you come to. It’s a little trickier if you plan on exiting at the second road to the right.

In these situations, look to your left and blend in with vehicles in the outer roundabout lane just as you did before. As you blend into the outer lane and start around the roundabout, you also need to look to your left to be sure a vehicle in the inner lane is not exiting at the first road to your right.

Stagger your outer lane position with the vehicle in the inner lane. Allow the vehicle in the inner lane to exit to the right in

front of or behind you.

Activate your right turn signal after you pass the first road to your right. This will let vehicles in front of and behind you in the inner lane of the roundabout, as well as vehicles about to enter the roundabout at the second road, know your intentions.

Drivers wanting to exit at the second or third road of a roundabout also may position their vehicle in the left lane of the road approaching the roundabout.

In this maneuver, the driver approaches the roundabout from the left lane and blends directly into the inner lane of the roundabout. Once positioned in the inner lane the driver should stagger their position with the vehicles in the outer lane of the roundabout.

Drivers in the inner roundabout lane should use a right turn signal to advise other drivers of their intentions to leave the roundabout. This will allow drivers in the outer roundabout lane to stagger their position with the vehicle in the inner lane and allow them to exit the roundabout safely.

This also will let drivers approaching the roundabout know the vehicle in the inner lane is exiting the roundabout.

Drivers intending to exit the roundabout at the third or fourth exits must position themselves in the left lane as they approach a roundabout. This will place them in the inner lane of the roundabout. The steps mentioned above for staggering and signaling are equally applicable for these maneuvers.

There is another feature of roundabouts that deserves some discussion. Lanes inside some roundabouts are painted to

direct the flow of vehicles as they approach single lanes exiting the roundabout.

A solid yellow line closes off the inside lane directing all vehicles to the outer lane of a roundabout just before a single lane exit. Drivers in the inner lane are directed to the outer lane. This

requires drivers in the outer lane to either exit the roundabout or merge carefully with vehicles in the inner lane.

So, here are some basic safety considerations when maneuvering through roundabouts:

- Slow to 20 mph as you approach the roundabout.
- Position yourself properly as you approach and maneuver through the roundabout.
- Vehicles approaching the roundabout in the left lane must

blend into the inner roundabout lane.

- Stagger your position with other vehicles inside the roundabout.

- Use your turn signals to let other drivers know your intentions.

- Try not to pass bicycles in either lane of a roundabout. It's just safer.

- Drive defensively. Expect the unexpected from other drivers. (They may not have read

this article.)

Reference the Sumter County Board of Commissioners' "A Guide to Navigating Roundabouts in Sumter County, Florida" brochure available at our Lake Sumter Landing District offices, Community Watch and regional recreation centers. A copy also is available on our website, districtgov.org.

Being prepared and properly positioning your vehicle

as you approach, enter and maneuver through roundabouts will make your driving experience much safer and enjoyable. Practice these driving habits regularly and we'll visit with a relaxed you again next week, right here at Our Place.

Scott Wilder is battalion chief of safety and Community Watch for the Village Community Development District.