



# Defensive Driving

The roads can be a dangerous place. According to federal government statistics, a motor vehicle accident occurs in the United States every five seconds, an injury auto accident every 10 seconds, and a fatal traffic accident every 12 minutes. Distracted drivers, speeding, and drivers under the influence cause or contribute to the majority of accidents each year. Drivers need to be cautious and aware of the other drivers while on the road.

Most collisions that occur today are preventable. Being a defensive driver is the best way to protect yourself. The National Safety Council defines defensive driving as, "Driving to save lives, time, and money in spite of the conditions around you and the actions of others". Defensive driving techniques involve more than just following the basic traffic laws.

## DEFENSIVE DRIVING

- Always wear your seatbelt.
- Do a quick walk around your vehicle to evaluate the condition of the vehicle prior to getting on the road.
- Avoid drowsy driving. Getting sleepy at the wheel? Pull over and stretch your legs, open the window, get some caffeine.
- Secure all loose items in your vehicle. Do not attempt to catch items sliding around in the vehicle.
- Slow down when the conditions warrant the need.
- Do not engage in road rage activities.
- Avoid collisions by all means necessary - within the limits of the law.
- Plan your travels before leaving for your destination.
- Recognize the risks of your surroundings while driving.
- Always keep your eyes moving, constantly looking at your side and rear-view mirrors, up, behind, and to both sides of the vehicle. Maintain a visual of two to three car lengths in front of them.

- When changing lanes, physically turn your head to check blind spots, followed by checking the side and rear view mirrors.
- Slow down at intersections. Even if you have the right of way, be prepared if someone decides to take that away from you.
- Look out for motorcycles, bicycles, pedestrians, and smaller vehicles.
- Leave at least two car lengths between the car in front of you. During inclement weather, increase this to five car lengths.
- Always give yourself an out. Avoid remaining next to other vehicles, move ahead or drop behind them to allow yourself room for maneuvering in case something happens. Try to avoid driving in someone's blind spot.
- Stop prior to stop signs and then roll forward slightly to get a better look in each direction.
- Always use signal lights and signal ahead of time to communicate your intentions to other drivers.
- Follow the speed limit and pay attention at all times.
- Minimize all distractions - i.e. eating, dialing or looking at phone, texting, selecting radio stations, etc. Be aware of your surroundings.
- Slow down in deer activity zones. Backing up is hard to do. Get a spotter if visibility behind you is restricted.

We cannot control what other drivers do, but we can control how we drive. Defensive driving techniques can help you reduce the chance of getting into a traffic accident and hurting yourself or someone else. Be on the defensive-not the offensive-when you get behind the wheel.

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