

## **PREVENTING MOTOR VEHICLE COLLISIONS:** *It All Rides On You*

This easy-to-use Leader's Guide is provided to assist in conducting a successful presentation. Featured are:

**INTRODUCTION:** A brief description of the program and the subject that it addresses.

**PROGRAM OUTLINE:** Summarizes the program content. If the program outline is discussed before the video is presented, the entire program will be more meaningful and successful.

**PREPARING FOR AND CONDUCTING THE PRESENTATION:** These sections will help you set up the training environment, help you relate the program to site-specific incidents, and provide program objectives for focusing your presentation.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:** Questions may be copied and given to participants to stimulate discussion about the program and its safety lessons.

### **INTRODUCTION**

During his 22 years as an EMT and firefighter, Martin Lesperance has witnessed the tragic results of countless motor vehicle collisions. In this motivational program, he recalls stories of the collision scenes he has attended to illustrate the consequences of the most common driving errors. Stressed during his presentation is the point that most of these incidents were not accidents—they were actually predictable and preventable events that didn't have to happen. Viewers will understand the importance of a 100 percent commitment to safe vehicle operation in preventing motor vehicle collisions.

Topics include physical and mental driving distractions, sleepy driving, how speed kills, the dangers of rushing and taking chances, the importance of looking before backing up and how seatbelts save lives.

### ***PROGRAM OUTLINE***

#### **BACKGROUND**

- In the U.S. every year, over 40,000 people die in motor vehicle collisions; add to that number several million others who are injured.
- You have to think that each one of these numbers is a living loving person with a story behind each one of these numbers.
- One of them was a beautiful 16-year-old girl who was involved in a collision that resulted in 600 stitches to her face and broken bones in that area. Her dad cries each time he looks at her because he was the one driving.
- A 23-year-old guy whose life revolved around sports received multiple fractures in his pelvis and legs. Now he's in constant pain and has to use a walker to get around.

#### **ANYONE CAN BE INVOLVED IN A COLLISION**

- Anyone can be involved in a motor vehicle collision; anyone who isn't safe when they are behind the wheel 100 percent of the time.
- Being safe 98 percent of the time isn't good enough. In that split second, when you're involved in that collision, there is so much violence inflicted on the people that are inside the vehicle that it's sickening.
- Motor vehicle collisions are terrible things to witness and they are horrible things to be involved in.
- To prevent motor vehicle collisions, you need to understand the main causes. What are the common mistakes people make?

## **PHYSICAL DISTRACTIONS**

- Drivers allow themselves to be distracted. When you are doing things such as applying lipstick while you're driving, you can't be watching where you're going.
- You cannot be concentrating on your driving when you're talking on your cell phone. If you're driving along and someone pulls out in front of you, you won't have time to take your mind off the conversation, process what's happening, drop the phone, put your other hand on the wheel and take evasive action.
- If you're on your way to work, talking on your cell phone, eating a muffin and drinking coffee, a little four-year-old boy who runs out in front of your vehicle won't stand a chance. If you know deep down that you were responsible for this because you weren't paying attention, it's going to be a life-changing experience in a very negative way.
- Whether you're reaching for a CD on the floor, a briefcase in the backseat or to get your child's attention in the backseat, you cannot be driving your vehicle.

## **MENTAL DISTRACTIONS**

- You don't have to be doing anything physically to be distracted while driving because you could just be mentally distracted.
- You may have just left the house after a fight with your spouse or one of your teenagers; maybe you just found out that you or a loved one has been diagnosed with a serious illness. These are major distractions.
- They can be so distracting that you become oblivious to everything around you. Maybe you don't notice that you just went through that red light until you're halfway through the intersection; you don't notice those little children who are playing between the parked cars 40 yards up the road.
- When you are distracted, it's really, really easy to look up but not see. You look but don't really process the information and that's why there are so many horrible collisions on the highway.
- A car comes up on a secondary highway and they are going to turn onto a main highway. They stop, look and pull right in front of oncoming traffic. Sometimes we forget what we're actually looking for.
- When you're behind the wheel, you have to concentrate. The best definition of concentration is wherever you are, be there.

## **SLEEPY DRIVING**

- If you drive a lot, especially long distances on the highway, there's a good chance you have fallen asleep behind the wheel.
- A "micro-sleep" is when you're driving and nod off for a few seconds; then you wake up and realize you fell asleep. If you've had a micro-sleep, you're lucky because for some people, their first micro-sleep is their last.
- If you're tired while driving and find yourself nodding or having a hard time focusing, pull over into a safe spot and take a good 15- to 20-minute nap. You don't want to become so tired behind the wheel you become dead tired.

## **DEATH DOESN'T PLAY FAVORITES**

- It doesn't matter how high your I.Q. is, how much money you have in the bank, what position you hold in the company or what position you hold in life—if you are in a serious car crash, your bones are going to break the same as everyone else's, you are going to bleed the same as everyone else and you are going to die the same as everyone else.
- Everyone involved in a collision is on the same playing field because death doesn't play any favorites whatsoever. This was proven when Princess Diana and one of the richest men in the world were killed in one of the safest cars that money can buy.

## **HOW SPEED KILLS**

- The faster you go, a) the harder it is to control your vehicle, b) the more distance you need to stop, c) the less time you have to react in emergency situations and d) the greater the force of impact then the more damage that is done to your bones, flesh, skull and face. The faster you go, the higher chance you have of dying.
- A driver of a pickup truck traveling 80 miles per hour on a city street lost control of the vehicle. It hit a curb and went flying through the air, then struck a street post and caught fire. The driver was trapped and died before the fire department could extinguish the flames.
- The driver may or may not have died had he been traveling 60 or 40 miles per hour, but he did die with him doing 80 miles per hour. He had no business going that speed on that road.
- Speed signs are there for a reason. If you're driving along the highway and you see a sign that says "40 miles an hour for this turn," it means 40 miles an hour during normal conditions; it doesn't mean 40 miles an hour in a snow storm, heavy rain or freezing rain.
- Pay attention to speed signs because they tell you that people who are just as good drivers as you have been killed or seriously injured on exactly that same stretch of road.

## **RUSHING & TAKING STUPID CHANCES**

- One of the main reasons for so many motor vehicle collisions is that people are in a rush and take stupid chances.
- Some examples of this include people attempting to pass on a double-solid line, run yellow lights or even run red lights because they are in a rush.
- Some people will back out their driveway right into oncoming traffic without looking because they are in a rush or because their kids were late for a soccer game.
- Taking these kinds of chances isn't worth it because if you're in a collision, it wouldn't do you and your family any good. "Better late than never" are very true words.

## **IMPORTANCE OF LOOKING BEFORE BACKING UP**

- People aren't careful when they're backing up. When backing up, you have huge blind spots and can't see where you are going.
- In most cases, the damage from a backing collision is minor because you are backing up at a slow speed and you hit another car in a parking lot or a shopping cart.
- Just because you are backing at slow speeds doesn't mean it can't be a serious situation. If you're backing up at a gas station and hit a gas pump, that could be a serious situation. If you're backing up from a parking lot into oncoming traffic, even though you are going slow, that could end up being a very serious situation.
- If you are backing up in your front driveway and you hit a garbage can at a slow speed, that's not going to cause much damage. If you backed up and hit a garbage can, you're lucky because that could have just as easily been your child or one of your neighbor's kids; if you didn't see that garbage can, you wouldn't have seen that child.
- A worker installing some cable television finished his job, hopped in his vehicle, backed up and heard someone scream. He got out and saw a child underneath the van. The driver and the family of the child will never be the same.
- Take a good look around before you start to back up.

## **DRIVING DEFENSIVELY**

- You should drive defensively at all times.

- You might be the safest driver in the state, but there may be someone coming towards you who isn't as safe as you. For whatever reason, they pull out in front of you; that's why you have to drive defensively.
- You have to look and anticipate what other drivers could possibly do.

### **HOW SEATBELTS SAVE LIVES**

- If you are involved in a crash, one of the only things you have to protect you is a seatbelt.
- In many crashes, a single vehicle rolls over, leaves the road and there's not that much damage to the vehicle. Ten yards away from the vehicle, however, there is a body that's not really messed up and there are other bodies and they're not really messed up. You wonder what really killed them.
- What happens inside a vehicle if you are not restrained is that as the vehicle rolls very violently, you are going to be thrown around inside the vehicle. You are going to be smashed against everything that's inside that vehicle.
- As the vehicle continues to roll, sooner or later you are usually forced out of the vehicle either through the front window, side windows or the back window. As the vehicle continues to roll, it quite often touches your head, chest and abdominal cavity and keeps on rolling.
- When they cut you open for your autopsy, they see your lungs full of blood. Your abdominal cavity may be full of blood and there may be massive bleeding inside your brain.
- This is common when you don't wear seatbelts. Seatbelts prevent that from happening.
- It might not be a roll over. Seatbelts also prevent you from going face-first into a windshield if you are involved in a head-on collision.
- Quite often, that hyper-extends your neck and gives you a high spinal cord injury—one of the worst things that can happen.
- Many people that have been involved in devastating collisions are still walking around because they wore their seatbelts.
- Wear your seatbelt at all times.

### **CONCLUSION**

- Driving safely is for you, your family and for others.
- Drive safely all the time, because it all rides on you!

## **PREPARE FOR THE SAFETY MEETING OR TRAINING SESSION**

Review each section of this Leader's Guide as well as the videotape. Here are a few suggestions for using the program:

Make everyone aware of the importance the company places on health and safety and how each person must be an active member of the safety team.

Introduce the videotape program. Play the videotape without interruption. Review the program content by presenting the information in the program outline.

Copy the review questions included in this Leader's Guide and ask each participant to complete them.

Make an attendance record and have each participant sign the form. Maintain the attendance record and each participant's test paper as written documentation of the training performed.

### **Here are some suggestions for preparing your videotape equipment and the room or area you use:**

Check the room or area for quietness, adequate ventilation and temperature, lighting and unobstructed access.

Check the seating arrangement and the audiovisual equipment to ensure that all participants will be able to see and hear the videotape program.

Place or secure extension cords to prevent them from becoming a tripping hazard.

## **CONDUCTING THE PRESENTATION**

Begin the meeting by welcoming the participants. Introduce yourself and give each person the opportunity to become acquainted if there are new people joining the training session.

Explain that the primary purpose of the program is to discuss the consequences of the most common driving errors and to explain why drivers must have a 100 percent commitment to safe vehicle operation.

Introduce the videotape program. Play the videotape without interruption. Review the program content by presenting the information in the program outline.

Lead discussions about the driving errors that were discussed in the video as well as other errors that can have tragic consequences if a motor vehicle collision occurs.

After watching the videotape program, the viewer will be able to explain the following:

- The physical and mental distractions that can result in a collision;
- Why sleepy driving, speed, rushing and taking stupid chances can be so dangerous;
- Why looking before backing up a vehicle is so important;
- Why you must wear a seatbelt at all times in a vehicle.

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**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. What are some mental and physical driving distractions that weren't mentioned in the video? What could the consequences of these distractions be?
2. What are some of the stupid chances people take while driving? Why do you think these stupid chances aren't worth the risk?
3. Martin says you must drive defensively because other drivers may not be as safe as you. What are some of the things you should look for and anticipate from other drivers?
4. What are your feelings about driving while using cell phones? Do you think it can be done safely? If so, under what circumstances?
5. Do you think drivers and passengers alike should be required to wear seatbelts at all times? Why or why not?
6. What all do you think is involved in maintaining a "100 percent" commitment to operating a vehicle safely? What can you do to make sure you uphold this commitment?