



ABOUT DEFENSIVE DRIVING

LENGTH: 10 MINUTES

PROGRAM SYNOPSIS:

Our workplace is full of hazards, hazards that can cause injury or kill us. Controlling these hazards and preventing injuries is the point of our safety and health program. One such hazard is the one presented by the unsafe operation of motor vehicles. Safe driving techniques, such as those utilized while driving defensively, can prevent injuries and save lives. That is the point of our organization's effort to educate workers about the defensive driving practices they should follow to avoid automobile crashes and that is the point of this program. So, pay close attention as we get to the point about defensive driving.

Topics include driving preparations, anticipating potential hazards, alerting others of your intentions, maintaining a safe speed and following distance and avoiding road rage situations.

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES:

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

- How to prepare yourself and your car or truck before operating the vehicle;
- How to "drive with awareness" by anticipating potential hazards and distractions;
- How to alert other drivers of your intended actions;
- How to maintain a safe speed and following distance;
- How to avoid road rage situations.

PROGRAM OUTLINE

BACKGROUND

- Defensive driving can be defined in simple terms as "operating a vehicle in a manner that uses safe driving techniques to ensure a motorist can address identified hazards successfully without incident."
- When most of us hear the term "defensive driving," we think about staying alert and being able to react quickly in order to evade a crash or prevent a collision out on the road, but it is more than that. Defensive driving helps to keep us out of situations that require evasive action in the first place.

DRIVING PREPARATIONS

- Defensive driving begins with preparation before you actually operate the vehicle and that preparation includes both you and your vehicle.
- Safely operating a motor vehicle requires your undivided attention so you can make good judgments and react to changing traffic conditions. To do this, you need to be well-rested and alert.
- Also, make sure you are not under the influence of alcohol or drugs—whether legal, illegal or prescription—before getting behind the wheel. Driving skills are greatly diminished when you are impaired, putting you, and others, at risk.
- You must also make sure the vehicle is safe to operate when preparing to hit the road. Make sure the turn signals, windshield wipers, horn and all lights are functioning properly.
- Remove any ice, snow or dirt from all windows and mirrors so you have a clear view in all directions.
- Plan your route carefully and program any navigation systems while the vehicle is parked.
- If inclement weather is expected, check road and traffic conditions and make sure the itinerary you choose is safe.
- Finally, make it a point to never drive while distracted. It is impossible to be both a distracted driver and a defensive driver; therefore, it is critical that all necessary precautions be taken, before departing, to ensure you won't become distracted when out on the road.
- This includes adjusting your seat, mirrors, audio and climate controls, stowing or securing items that could roll around in the seat or fall to the floor and putting away cell phones, tablets and all other handheld distractions.

ANTICIPATING POTENTIAL HAZARDS

- After preparing to operate your vehicle, you must make sure to "drive with awareness" while out on the road. Driving with awareness simply means keeping your eyes—and just as importantly—your mind—on the road so you can avoid distractions and anticipate potential hazards.
- Make it a point to scan your surroundings regularly as you drive, taking note of traffic lights, lane closures, pedestrians and other traffic.

- Look well enough ahead of the vehicle in front of you so that you can see brake lights or sudden lane changes that indicate potential problems. This will give you ample time to react accordingly.
- Also, make sure to check your rear view and side mirrors periodically to make sure other vehicles aren't approaching your blind spot. The blind spot is that area next to your vehicle where another vehicle will be out of the view of the side mirrors.
- If a car or truck that was behind you is no longer in sight, you must assume that it has entered your blind spot unless you are able to verify otherwise.
- Always make sure your blind spot is clear before changing lanes.
- Defensive driving requires that we anticipate the potential maneuvers of other drivers. Pay particular attention to vehicles in passing lanes, turn-only lanes and busy intersections. Drivers in these situations often make unexpected maneuvers.
- When waiting at a red light and the light turns green, make sure drivers in all of the other directions come to a complete stop before proceeding into the intersection.
- Many collisions and fatalities occur when drivers run through yellow or even red lights and collide with a vehicle that has just entered the intersection on a green light without looking.
- Also, make sure oncoming traffic is a safe distance away or has stopped when turning left on a yellow light.
- Be prepared to change lanes or adjust your speed if there are cars in the acceleration lane or "merge lane" so they have plenty of room to safely merge into your lane.

ALERTING OTHERS OF YOUR INTENTIONS

- Just as you must be on the lookout for the actions of other drivers, be aware that other drivers must be made aware of your planned actions.
- Always use your turn signals to alert other drivers of your intentions.
- Give drivers behind you advance notice that you intend to slow down or stop by tapping your brake pedal to flash your brake lights. If a driver is following too closely or traveling at a high rate of speed, this advanced notice can help prevent a collision.
- Don't linger for extended periods in another vehicle's blind spot, as this places you at risk should the other driver change lanes unexpectedly.

MAINTAINING A SAFE SPEED

- The point of defensive driving is to successfully prevent or evade a potential crash and one of the critical techniques used to achieve this is to maintain a safe speed and following distance. Each of these items has a direct impact on the time we have to react to changing conditions and how much room is available to safely maneuver the vehicle to avoid a crash.
- The speed at which we are traveling has a direct effect on the amount of time we have to react to changing conditions such as, traffic that slows suddenly or comes to a stop unexpectedly, other vehicles changing lanes without notice, a pedestrian stepping into the roadway or any number of unsafe maneuvers by other drivers.
- Traveling at a safe speed provides the reaction time and room to maneuver needed to safely avoid these situations. Conversely, when we are traveling too fast, it is much more difficult to avoid an incident or stop in time.

MAINTAINING A SAFE FOLLOWING DISTANCE

- Also, make it a point not to follow other vehicles too closely. A general rule of thumb is to maintain at least a two-second space when following another vehicle. You can measure your following distance by counting "one one-thousand, two one-thousand" when the car ahead passes a stationary object.
- Increase this distance to three seconds when traveling at speeds over 40 miles per hour.
- If you are driving a van or delivery truck or hauling a trailer, your stopping distance is impacted by the weight of the vehicle and the load. Thus, you should keep a four-second cushion from the vehicle ahead when traveling up to 40 miles per hour and maintain a five-second following distance when traveling over 40 miles per hour.

AVOIDING ROAD RAGE SITUATIONS

- Another important aspect of defensive driving is avoiding any type of road rage incidents and steering clear of aggressive driving situations. Road rage or aggressive driving can quickly escalate into a dangerous situation.
- Road rage often starts with one person's hostility and causes a ripple effect on nearby drivers. Do not participate in this type of activity and do not escalate it.
- Should you encounter a road rage situation, remain calm and slow down, exit or change lanes or take any other action required to get away from the aggressive driver in a safe manner.