

MODERN DRIVING HAZARDS: ROAD RAGE, CELL PHONES & OTHER DANGERS

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.

REVIEW QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS: Questions may be copied and given to participants to document how well they understood the information that was presented. Answers to the review questions are provided separately.

ATTENDANCE RECORD: Document the date of your presentation as well as identify the program participants. The attendance record may be copied as needed.

INTRODUCTION

Modern day driving conditions constantly challenge us to operate automobiles as safely as possible while we deal with other complications in life. Our busy schedules can be quite stressful and we find ourselves trying to make the most of every possible moment in each day. This often means that each trip in a vehicle becomes a race against time and other drivers. Time restraints sometimes make us feel that we must get other things done while driving through the use of cellular phones and other devices. The highly stressful, aggressive nature of today's driving environment can also lead to volatile confrontations between drivers. We should be aware that all of these things can be very dangerous and that we must take the necessary steps to stay safe on the road.

This video analyzes the four stages of road rage and the steps drivers can take to keep themselves from becoming a victim of violence. The use of cellular phones and other modern devices while driving is also reviewed. Stressed in the program is the importance of safe driving for those who drive company vehicles.

PROGRAM OUTLINE

ROAD RAGE

- The high stress, aggressive nature of today's driving environment can lead to dangerous confrontations between drivers. This is known as "road rage."
- While road rage once seemed to be only a few isolated incidents, it now appears to be a problem all over the U.S.
- Angry, aggressive drivers who escalate minor situations into dangerous confrontations can be found everywhere roads exist.

MISPLACED ANGER AND UNCONTROLLED EMOTION

- "Misplaced Anger and Uncontrolled Emotion" is the first stage of road rage and exists before an incident takes place.
- An increase in hostile and aggressive driving in our society has been attributed to stress, crowded roads, busy schedules and a general disrespect for the rights of others.
- Also, many otherwise normal people have a change of personality as soon as they get behind the wheel of an automobile. They take a "me against the world" mentality in the race against time and other drivers to arrive at their destination.
- These "angry" drivers create a misplaced personal identification with their cars and take an unhealthy pride in being a better driver than those around them.

- When other drivers threaten this misplaced superiority by honking horns or aggressive driving, the angry driver takes it as a direct personal insult.
- Some of the ways the angry driver responds are verbally condemning and denigrating other drivers, tailgating slower traffic, blocking others attempting to pass, and honking, yelling or making gestures at other drivers to express displeasure.
- If you find yourself exhibiting these symptoms, you have a higher risk of becoming involved in a road rage conflict.

CONTROLLING YOUR EMOTIONS

- Leave your pride at home. Remember that the actions of other drivers are not aimed at you personally.
- Keep in mind that all drivers, including yourself, make mistakes and poor decisions. Avoid being overly critical of others' actions.
- Realize that we share the road with drivers of all ages and abilities. Each driver has as much right to be on the road or in a certain lane as you.
- Don't be selfish. Think about how your actions affect others rather than driving aggressively.
- Perform a few acts of kindness by letting others into traffic or yielding to faster drivers. You will find that kindness is contagious and you will feel better too.

TRIGGER INCIDENTS

- The second stage of a road rage conflict is the "trigger incident." This is usually a minor traffic maneuver or close call that is misinterpreted by an angry driver as a direct threat or personal assault.
- Such maneuvers include tailgating, driving straight in the turning lane, driving slowly in the passing lane and not giving enough clearance when passing other vehicles.
- Each of these maneuvers could be the trigger incident in a road rage conflict. To avoid conflicts with other drivers, you need to avoid making one of these moves.
- Be sure to signal all turns and lane changes.
- Don't pull out in front of other cars. Let them go by and then pull out.
- When using the passing lane, make sure it is clear of faster drivers before pulling into it.
- Allow plenty of room to stop in case traffic in front should begin to slow.

OTHER PROVOCATIVE ACTIONS

- Don't sacrifice the safety of others for your convenience. Selfish and dangerous actions can put other drivers into a rage.
- Don't pass on the shoulder or in the emergency lane when the passing lane is blocked.
- You shouldn't race ahead when your lane is merging in order to pass as many others as possible and then merging at the last possible moment.
- Don't back up in traffic or on the shoulder of the interstate if you miss your turn or exit.
- Turn only lanes should not be used for passing rather than turning.

DRIVING COMPANY VEHICLES

- Trigger incidents made by drivers of vehicles marked with company identification seem to generate a higher level of anger.
- The angry driver not only feels victimized by the person driving, but also by the whole company or organization that is represented.
- Drivers of these types of vehicles must proceed with extra caution and realize that they have a higher risk of experiencing a road rage conflict.
- How company vehicles are operated reflects on the image of the company. Companies do not need a poor image resulting from inconsiderate corporate drivers.

FIRST ANGRY REACTION

- No matter who is responsible for the trigger incident, the action taken in response to it is known as the “first angry reaction.”
- This reaction may be blowing a horn, a hand gesture or a verbal confrontation.
- While you may feel such a reaction is justified, remember that an angry, aggressive driver will take your reaction as a personal attack on his or her driving ability.
- The person will feel victimized, hurt or offended by your reaction. Because he or she may feel the need to retaliate, the conflict may escalate to the next level.
- Rather than express your anger, you should back off. Avoid making eye contact and try to keep distance between the two vehicles. Resist the urge to let the person know he or she did something wrong.
- Use anger management methods to calm down and avoid escalating the conflict. You must keep the situation under control.
- Losing your temper and confronting the other driver could release anger and rage that can only end in a final violent confrontation.

RETALIATION AND ESCALATION

- The fourth and final stage of road rage is “retaliation and escalation,” which is marked by increasingly violent expressions of anger towards each other. Each driver feels like a victim, becoming more enraged each time the other dares to challenge him.
- The more rounds this fight goes, the harder it is for either driver to back down.
- If there is to be any chance of a non-violent ending to this dangerous situation, one driver must assume a non-threatening position and make every effort to defuse the situation.
- If you are involved, break off the engagement, put space between the vehicles and stop eye contact with the other driver.
- If possible, take an exit, make a turn or do anything to cut off contact with the other driver. Remember that your life is in danger at this point.
- Should you not be able to get away, drive to a well-lit, populated area and seek help.

CELLULAR TELEPHONES

- While cell phones have become helpful devices in our every day lives, they may become a distraction when we are operating motor vehicles.

- The main risk associated with cell phones is the driver becoming distracted and not responding to changing traffic or road conditions.
- Studies show that certain types of cell phone conversations lead to increased risk of failing to respond to hazardous driving conditions.
- One study indicates a 34% higher accident rate for those cars equipped with cell phones.
- To prevent accidents, find a safe spot and pull over before using the phone. In some countries, it is illegal to drive while talking on the phone and some states are considering such legislation.

CELL PHONE ACTIVITY

- Cell phone activity can be divided into three categories: dialing, light conversation and intense conversation. Intense conversation is the most distracting to the driver.
- Driving while engaged in an intense conversation increases the chance by 30% that you will fail to respond to changing driving conditions.
- Intense, emotional or complex conversations should not be carried out while driving. Pull over and stop, or wait until you have arrived at your destination before engaging in these types of conversations.
- Studies have shown that light conversation and dialing can be done safely while driving if basic safety practices are followed.
- Become familiar with your phone before using it in the automobile. Learn how to use the speed dial and redial features.
- Store frequently called numbers in memory and become familiar with the keypad so you can use these functions without taking your focus off the road.
- If available, utilize the hands-free option on your phone. Many phones have speakerphone accessories or other mounted devices to let you talk while keeping both hands on the wheel.
- Keep the phone within easy reach so you can get to it without taking your eyes off of the road.
- Only use the phone in light traffic and good conditions. End conversations when traffic gets heavy or some other condition such as rain or snow makes driving hazardous.
- Remember that paying attention to the road is your number one priority. Don't let your conversation draw you into more dangerous activities such as looking up numbers, taking notes or checking e-mail.

USE OF OTHER DEVICES

- Modern technology continues to give us an assortment of devices to use in our cars. Fax machines, lap top computers, even internet access with special view finders for web pages, e-mail or faxes are now available.
- No matter how high-tech a device is, it should not be used while driving if it takes your attention away from the road.
- Just because a device can be used in the car doesn't mean it should be used in the car, especially while you are driving. Pull over before you get connected.

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.

Copy the attendance record as needed 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 stress the importance of driving safely on today's roads, highways and interstates where hazards can cause endless distractions..

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 specific driving concerns of your employees and what they can do to keep them from contributing to accidents and injuries. Use the review questions to check how well the participants understood the information.

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

- The four stages of road rage and what can be done to avoid confrontation on the road;
- The importance of extra caution and safe driving maneuvers when operating company vehicles;
- When it is safe and unsafe to use cellular phones while driving;
- Why drivers should pull off of the road when using other portable devices in their cars.

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Name _____ Date _____

The following questions are provided to check how well you understand the information presented during this program.

1. Road rage conflicts do not occur in rural areas or in places where traffic flow is light.
 - a. true
 - b. false

2. Trigger incidents that involve corporate vehicles usually generate _____ of anger as other trigger incidents.
 - a. higher levels
 - b. lower levels
 - c. the same amount

3. If an angry driver makes a confrontational gesture towards you, you should _____.
 - a. avoid making contact with the driver
 - b. keep distance between his and your vehicles
 - c. back off from a confrontation
 - d. all of the above

4. If you can't seem to get away from a violent driver, what should you do?
 - a. stop your car and prepare for conflict
 - b. motion to other drivers that you need help
 - c. drive to a well-lit, populated area and seek help
 - d. none of the above

5. Which type of cell phone activity is most distracting to the driver?
 - a. dialing
 - b. light conversation
 - c. intense conversation

6. Accidents rates are higher for cars equipped with cell phones.
 - a. true
 - b. false

7. You should pass other cars on the shoulder of the road or the emergency lane when the passing lane is blocked.
 - a. true
 - b. false

ANSWERS TO THE REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. b

2. a

3. d

4. c

5. c

6. a

7. b