

DEFENSIVE DRIVING AND SAFE DRIVING HABITS

DRIVING BEHAVIOR

There are many factors which determine an individual's attitude towards driving.

- ~ Demographic- age, sex, employment background, education, where they live
- ~ Personality - tolerance, aggressiveness, risk taking, susceptibility to peer pressure
- ~ Developmental- physical, emotional, social, behavioral
- ~ Environment - community involvement, risk perception, entertainment, parent's influence, peers behavior, spouse/partner behavior
- ~ Driving Environment - daylight or dark, weather and road conditions, vehicle type, passengers
- ~ Driving ability - knowledge, skill, experience

All of these factors combine and help to determine if a driver will be courteous, safe and law abiding or a tailgating, speeding and discourteous individual that fails to use his safety belt.

DEFENSIVE DRIVING

Most of us would like to believe we not only know what it takes to be a good driver and that we put that knowledge into practice every time we are behind the wheel. Unfortunately, most of us never get past the basics. Defensive driving involves a proactive attitude behind the wheel and anticipating potential hazards instead of simply reacting to them. You should know the limitations of both yourself and your vehicle and how to handle both in a hazard situation. Driving defensively means not only taking responsibility for yourself and your actions, but also keeping an eye on "the other guy." The National Safety Council suggests the following guidelines to help reduce your risks on the road:

- Don't start the engine without securing each passenger in the car, including children and pets.
- Safety belts save thousands of lives each year!
- Lock all doors.
- Remember that driving too fast or too slow can increase the likelihood of collisions.
- If you plan to drink, designate a driver who won't drink. Alcohol is a factor in almost half of all fatal motor vehicle crashes.
- Be alert! If you notice that a car is straddling the center line, weaving, making wide turns, stopping abruptly or responding slowly to traffic signals, the driver may be impaired.
- Avoid an impaired driver by turning right at the nearest corner or exiting at the nearest exit.
- If it appears that an oncoming car is crossing into your lane, pull over to the roadside, sound the horn and flash your lights.
- Notify the police immediately after seeing a motorist who is driving suspiciously or recklessly.
- Follow the rules of the road. Don't contest the "right of way" or try to race another car during a merge. Be respectful of other motorists.

DEFENSIVE DRIVING TECHNIQUES

The SIPDE effectively teaches how to drive defensively.

SIPDE

S -Sweep, Search, and Scan (keep your eyes moving at all times to effectively see imminent danger)

I • Identify hazards, Identify what's happening (road-way features) (take notice of things that could cause trouble)

P • Predict which hazards could potentially come into conflict with you; predict 2 things 1-worst case scenario and 2-actions

D • Decide on a safe action (decide on something to do should the dog run across the road)

E • Execute a move to avoid conflict (braking, accelerating, turning, etc.

Defensive driving not only ensures road safety. It also saves fuel, lowers the cost of insurance premiums, and increase the overall life of the vehicle.

DEFENSIVE DRIVING CHARACTERISTICS

While there are many characteristics of a defensive these four are essential to the driving task:

Alertness

A defensive driver will try to predict possible danger and be prepared to act accordingly. Good defensive drivers are alert to what is going on around them. They are well rested and would never take any drugs or alcohol that could affect their concentration before driving. You must always pay attention to details happening around you as you drive and if you are impaired in any way, you will not be able to do that properly.

Anticipation

Defensive drivers maintain a safe following distance. Defensive drivers anticipate what may or may not happen, and they take action to avoid many problems. Tailgating and following too closely does not allow for the needed seconds to avoid a possible crash. You must anticipate potential hazards from other drivers, motorists, pedestrians, weather and equipment and take steps to minimize the risk.

Judgment

Make sure you do not exceed the posted speed limit. In poor weather conditions, slow down so you are able to control your vehicle. Good defensive drivers do not make risky maneuvers like trying to beat red lights or trains. They don't try to pass unless it's safe and they look for alternatives to any traffic situation.

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Good defensive drivers have the skills to operate a vehicle safely through traffic without endangering anyone else on the road. A defensive driver is aware of the blind spot of the vehicle in front of them.

A good defensive driver will scan the road ahead, avoid being distracted, and maintain road discipline.

CELL PHONES AND DRIVING

Whether you're talking or just listening, using a cell phone will make it harder to drive a car safely.

A recent University of Illinois study showed that drivers who were speaking or listening had more difficulty maintaining a steady speed, keeping a constant distance between themselves and other vehicles, and staying in the proper lane.

Researchers say the results show that the mental task of conversing on a cell phone In addition to the physical task of handling the equipment both impair a person's ability to drive safely.

The results showed that both speaking and listening had negative effects on driving. It is not just enough to limit your time on the cell phone or use hands free equipment.

If you are truly focused on- being the most professional type of driver, cell phone usage should be extremely restricted. This is especially applicable for new teenage and senior drivers.