



Driving Safely

Increasingly long commutes and traffic congestion on roadways consume time and money, reduce productivity, and promote risky driving behavior. Because we spend so much time behind the wheel, we sometimes feel pressured to drive faster or to engage in distracting in-vehicle activities just so we can feel that we're not "wasting time" as we drive. However, engaging in these unsafe driving practices often leads to accidents and injuries, sometimes fatal.

Whether you drive your personal vehicle for work purposes, operate a company vehicle, or run errands with your kids in the family car, focus on driving cautiously and safely. Think about the following factors that can affect your safety and the safety of your passengers.

Seat belts are the single most effective means of reducing deaths and serious injuries in automobile crashes. During a crash, anyone who is not wearing a seat belt will slam into the steering wheel, into another passenger, into the windshield, or can be ejected from the vehicle. Ejection from a vehicle is one of the most dangerous things that can happen during a crash. In fatal crashes in 2004, 74% of those who were ejected from the vehicle were killed.

Multi-tasking is a way of coping with hectic schedules and time lost to traffic delays. More road time means less time at work or home. Remember that "drive time" is not "down time," and it is not an opportunity to check e-mail, write a text message, apply makeup, shave, or eat a meal. Use of a cell phone is strictly prohibited. Pull over/off the road somewhere safe if it is necessary to take a cell phone call.

Alcohol, illegal drugs, and medications (whether prescription or over-the-counter) can affect your ability to drive safely. They can reduce your alertness, concentration, and coordination, and increase your reaction time. Alcohol is a contributing factor in 39% of all work-related traffic crashes. Don't risk your life or your job.

If you're tired or upset, don't drive. You may not be in a condition that will allow you to make smart, quick decisions. When driving a vehicle, it's important that you be well rested and alert so that you are in a position to defend yourself from drivers who make unsafe choices.

Aggressive driving includes speeding, tailgating, failure to signal, running red lights, and passing on the right. Avoid engaging in any conflict or one-ups-man-ship with other drivers. Allow others to merge. Treat other drivers as you want to be treated. Be particularly careful in bad weather.



Poor visibility caused by poor lighting (particularly at night), glare, and bad weather can make it difficult to see and avoid other vehicles, pedestrians, cyclists, and other obstacles. Slow down and stay alert.

Winter weather brings special challenges. Road conditions can deteriorate making them slippery, icy or impassible. If conditions are bad enough, consider alternatives such as conference calls, video-conferencing, etc. Slow down and plan accordingly. Check with the Highway Patrol for road conditions. No scheduled event is more important than saving your life. Also, 4-wheel drive may help you “go” better ***but all cars have 4 wheel stop!***

SAFETY REMINDER

Motor vehicle fatalities usually happen one or two at a time, and don't get much news attention. But 40,000 people will die in vehicle accidents this year. Drive safely and stay alive.