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Defensive Driving

A 5-Minute Safety Training Aid

When driving is part of your job duties, whether you are behind the wheel of a rental vehicle, a van, a company car, or an eighteen-wheeler, you are a professional driver. Most drivers can drive around the block without incident, but it takes a dedicated professional to drive perfectly for thousands of miles. When professional drivers are at the controls of any vehicle they should always remember that defensive driving is a full-time job. They take the time to complete pre-trip checklists and perform inspections that familiarize the driver with the vehicle and identifies unsafe mechanical conditions that may need repair.

The driving conditions of today's roads and highways demand a higher level of skill, knowledge, and decision-making ability. A defensive driver is someone who looks out for the mistakes of other drivers; not merely a person who has had the good fortune to avoid accidents.

Safety-conscious drivers:

- develop good habits and practice them continually;
- are prepared mentally and physically every time they are behind the wheel;
- comply with all traffic laws and are courteous to others;
- remember that speed, whether too slow or too fast, kills;
- condition their driving to the current driving conditions;
- maintain a safe distance from the vehicle in front of them-one vehicle length for each 10 mph; and
- are aware of the vehicle's limitations.

Defensive drivers:

- have foresight that gives them the ability to size up traffic situations on the road ahead;

- start slowing down sooner and apply the brakes the instant they see a hazard developing;
- apply the brakes gradually so they don't spin or grind to a stop so quickly that they risk a rear-end collision; and
- anticipate the incorrect actions of other drivers in time to take the actions necessary to prevent the accident.



Professional drivers:

- practice defensive driving to prevent accidents, in spite of the incorrect actions of other drivers or adverse weather conditions;
- anticipate driving hazards and know how to protect themselves from roadway dangers;
- remain alert and focus their attention on driving by keeping their minds free of distractions;
- watch for and instantly recognize accident-causing factors;
- anticipate traffic problems that may develop and decide whether these developments could be dangerous.

In other words, defensive drivers must learn to maintain and operate their vehicles in a manner that avoids contributing to an accident or being involved in a preventable accident. Remember to drive defensively and practice safety; don't learn it by accident.

References

- Defensive Driving. Ohio Industrial Commission, Division of Safety and Hygiene
- <http://hazard.com/library/topics/drive/def.html>

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