



Defensive Driving

HS02-003B (7-06)

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 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;
- adapts 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 accidents.

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.

This safety training aid was produced with information from

- Defensive Driving. Ohio Industrial Commission, Division of Safety and Hygiene
- Reprinted with permission of Baldwin & Lyons, The Quill.

The Texas Department of Insurance, Division of Workers' Compensation (TDI-DWC) also offers several other free driving-related safety publications online at <http://tdi.texas.gov/wc/safety/videosources/index.htm>, including:

- Aging and Driving, Safety Training Program,
- Driving and Being Prepared ,Checklist
- Driving at Work, Checklist
- Driving and Using Cellular Telephones, Safety Training Program

- Driving Fatigue Prevention, Take 5 for Safety
- Driving in Highway Construction Zones, Take 5 for Safety
- Driving in the Rain, Take 5 for Safety
- Driving Safety, Take 5 for Safety
- Night Blindness, Take 5 for Safety
- Staying Alert and Fit to Drive, Safety Training Program
- Vehicle Safety, Checklist
- Vehicle Battery Safety, Take 5 for Safety.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics' preliminary fatality data for Texas, there were 196 work related fatalities due to transportation accidents in 2010. The latest nonfatal data is for 2009 and shows that there were 4,270 nonfatal cases that were caused by transportation accidents and required days away from work.

The Texas Department of Insurance, Division of Workers' Compensation (TDI, DWC) Resource Center offers a workers' health and safety DVD library. Call (512) 804-4620 for more information or visit our web site at <http://www.tdi.texas.gov/wc/safety/videoresources/avcatalog.html>.

Disclaimer: Information contained in this training program is considered accurate at time of publication.