

TITLE: 1813 THREE KEYS TO SAFE DRIVING: *Prepare, Anticipate & Defend*

LENGTH: 17 MINUTES

PRODUCTION YEAR: 2018

PROGRAM SYNOPSIS:

Driving a motor vehicle can be challenging and complicated. Because practically every person will operate or be a passenger in some type of vehicle each day, motor vehicle safety is not only important for drivers of personal vehicles, but is also an important safety issue for employers and workplaces worldwide. In fact, motor vehicle crashes account for more than 40 percent of all work-related deaths and an even larger percentage of all injuries that result in time away from work. There are a multitude of reasons for such a high injury rate related to motor vehicles, including unsafe driving habits, changing traffic and weather conditions and unpredictable actions of other drivers. This program discusses three key elements of a safe driving strategy that allow vehicle operators to navigate safely through this ever-changing and potentially hazardous environment: Prepare; Anticipate; and Defend.

Topics include preparing yourself and your vehicle for travel, planning your route and preparing for conditions, anticipating driving hazards, avoiding distracted and fatigued driving, speeding, following too closely, safe driving habits and aggressive driving.

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES: After watching the program, the participant should be able to explain the following:

- How to prepare themselves and their vehicles before heading out on the road;
- How to successfully anticipate driving hazards;
- How to avoid distracted and fatigued driving;
- How speeding and following too closely reduce our reaction times;
- Which safe driving habits help defend against a crash;
- How to properly respond to aggressive driving.

PROGRAM OUTLINE

BACKGROUND

- Because practically every person will operate or be a passenger in some type of vehicle each day, motor vehicle safety is not only important for drivers of personal vehicles, but is also an important safety issue for employers and workplaces worldwide.
- In fact, motor vehicle crashes account for more than 40 percent of all work-related deaths and an even larger percentage of all injuries that result in time away from work. There are a multitude of reasons for such a high injury rate related to motor vehicles.
- Many vehicles are improperly maintained and not in good working order, road and traffic conditions are always changing, the actions of other drivers are not always predictable, changing weather conditions can make driving more hazardous and many drivers have become complacent, leading to bad habits such as distractions, speeding and other unsafe behaviors.
- Three key elements of a safe driving strategy allow vehicle operators to navigate safely through this ever changing and potentially hazardous environment: Prepare; Anticipate; and Defend.
- No matter what type of vehicle you drive and regardless of whether you drive for work or pleasure, these three elements can be applied to you, your vehicle and your driving habits.

PREPARE

Preparing Yourself

- Prepare refers to both you and your vehicle. In any driving scenario there are two items that you have absolute control over: you and your vehicle, and it is your responsibility to make sure that both are prepared before heading out on the road.
- First, you must understand that there are many different types of vehicles and many have unique operating characteristics. Make sure you are properly trained and qualified before operating any type of vehicle, whether it's a car, motorcycle, van, service truck or commercial vehicle.
- In addition, you must have a valid driver's license for the type of vehicle to be operated and your license must be in your possession at all times while driving.
- Not only must you be qualified and licensed, but you must also be ready and able to safely operate the vehicle. This means that you must be well rested and not so fatigued that you become sleepy while driving and you must be free from any effects of alcohol, marijuana or other drug use.
- Safe driving requires the ability to concentrate, make good judgements and quickly react to situations; however, alcohol, marijuana and other drugs negatively affect these skills, putting yourself and others in danger.
- Even drugs prescribed by a doctor can impair your ability. Make sure you read and understand the effects of any prescription drugs you are taking.
- Never drive while under the influence of any type of drug. Period.

Preparing Your Vehicle

- Being prepared includes making sure the vehicle is in good working order and safe to operate.
- All vehicles should be regularly maintained and inspected by a qualified service center to ensure its ongoing roadworthiness.
- In addition to regular maintenance, the vehicle's safety-related items should be inspected before each use. Make sure the brake lights, headlights, turn signals, windshield wipers and horn are working properly.

- All mirrors must be in place and functional and if the vehicle has a backup camera and backup alarm, they should be verified as working. All of these items are critical to safe vehicle operation.
- Tires are another critical safety component of all vehicles. Tires should be inflated to the manufacturer's recommended air pressure. Overinflated or underinflated tires are very hazardous and can lead to tire failure and roll over incidents.
- Before driving, you must prepare your vehicle for maximum visibility. A driver's ability to see out of the vehicle is a critical part of safe driving.
- Clean any ice, snow or dirt from all windows and mirrors so your view is not impeded.
- Any loads being carried must be arranged so they do not block the driver's view and secured so they do not shift while traveling.
- Adjust the seat and the mirrors to ensure that you have maximum visibility all around your vehicle. It's important to do this before you get moving. Adjusting your mirrors while driving can be distracting and dangerous.

Planning The Route & Preparing For Conditions

- Before departing, study and plan your route carefully and consider any hazards that may exist between your starting and stopping points.
- Even if you plan to use a navigation system or app, you should become familiar with the route before heading out so you will not be surprised by the commands it gives or distracted by having to interact with its interface.
- Finally, you must be prepared for the weather and the expected road conditions.
- Depending on the forecast you may need to bring along extra equipment or emergency supplies. If wintry conditions are expected, you may need to plan a different route or decide not to head out at all.
- Also check current road and traffic reports before departing and keep abreast of changing conditions as you drive. Detours, accidents and construction can all contribute to heavy traffic conditions and make driving more challenging.
- Knowing about these situations beforehand gives you the option to select alternate routes and allow additional time for travel.

ANTICIPATE

- Now that you have properly prepared yourself, your vehicle and your route, you are ready to get rolling towards the second key element of a safe driving strategy: Anticipate.
- "Anticipate" is defined by the idea that safe driving is not a passive activity. Safe driving is an active process that requires your ongoing concentration and constant attention to be aware of upcoming hazards and the impending actions of other drivers. In other words, to anticipate any upcoming danger so it may be avoided safely.
- To successfully anticipate driving hazards, you must constantly scan around you as you drive, keeping a mental inventory of approaching cars, traffic lights, lane closures and other conditions.
- Slowly turn your head left and right and take in a wide view, from roadside to roadside.
- When scanning, you must not only look for existing hazards such as stalled vehicles, lane closures or potholes, you must also look for indications of potential hazards such as animals on the road side, traffic approaching on cross roads or children playing nearby.
- Take notice of the traffic around you and be sure to look well beyond the vehicles directly in front of you. By keeping an eye on the cars farther ahead of you, you will see indications of any upcoming problems and have more time to react. For example, sudden lane changes or the appearance of brake lights indicate that traffic is obstructed or stopping.
- While constantly scanning side to side, be sure to also include a brief check of your rear view mirror and side mirrors and make a mental note of the position of other vehicles and whether or not they are overtaking you. This level of attention allows you to know when an approaching vehicle enters and exits your blind spot.
- If a vehicle that was behind you is suddenly no longer there, you must assume it is in your blind spot until you are able to confirm otherwise.
- Busy intersections, turn-only lanes and acceleration lanes for merging are all common areas where crashes occur. These are also areas where you should try to anticipate the pending actions of other drivers.
- When stopped at a red light, keep an eye on the drivers approaching the intersection as their light turns yellow. Drivers who make no effort to slow down will likely run the red light.
- When your light turns green, make sure all cross traffic has passed or stopped before pulling into the intersection.
- Similarly, if you must turn left on a yellow light, take note of the speed of approaching cars and do not turn until you are confident they are not attempting to run the light.
- Anticipate that cars in an acceleration lane must merge into your lane and either change lanes or modify your speed to give them safe room to do so.
- These are just a few specific examples. There are countless other opportunities you have while driving to anticipate the actions of other drivers if you make a practice of being active, engaged and aware of what is transpiring around you.

'JUST DRIVE' TO AVOID DISTRACTED DRIVING

- Keep in mind that a distracted driver cannot also be a safe, aware driver.
- Unfortunately, in today's world there are a myriad of potential distractions that can not only prevent drivers from anticipating upcoming hazards, but also cause them to become a hazard to others.
- It just takes a few seconds to read or respond to a message or post; it only takes a few moments to modify a route in a navigation system; and, it only takes a few seconds to remove a tomato from a messy hamburger or to add sugar to your coffee.
- But doing these simple things, and countless others, takes your eyes and your focus off the road for a few seconds, which is all it takes for a disaster to happen.
- All it takes is for traffic to suddenly stop moving, an animal to step into the road or an approaching car to cross the center line for a devastating crash to occur.
- The best practice to prevent becoming a distracted driver is to "just drive" while driving. Don't eat. Don't apply make up. Don't read. Don't text. Just drive.

- Put all phones and other distractions away while driving. Be aware that in some states it is illegal to have a phone conversation while driving, even if it is "hands free."
- It is never okay to text and drive. Pull off the road in a safe place if you need to make a call or use a device.
- If you must speak on the phone while driving, and it is legal to do so, utilize a hands-free option so you may keep both hands on the wheel. Even so, keep the conversation brief and disconnect if traffic conditions become challenging.
- If you drive as part of your job, make sure to follow your organization's policies regarding cell phone and hands-free device usage while driving.

AVOIDING FATIGUED DRIVING

- Another, more extreme circumstance of a distracted driver is that of a fatigued driver. After all, sleeping is the ultimate form of distraction behind the wheel.
- As a driver, you must be able to recognize the warning signs of fatigue: drifting from lane to lane, yawning repeatedly, even nodding off briefly and being startled awake. When this occurs, you cannot count on the radio, an open window or even caffeine to keep you awake.
- You must respond to the symptoms of fatigue by finding a safe place to stop and getting some sleep.

DEFEND

- There is a reason you must remain alert and focused while driving; it's so you can take quick action to avoid a collision when needed. Taking action to avoid crashes and collisions is the focus of the third and final key to safe driving: Defend.
- "Defend" refers to taking evasive or defensive action to avoid a collision or crash. It also means driving in a manner that helps prevent or avoid the need to take evasive action in the first place.
- There are two factors that control how successful a defensive move will be in avoiding a crash: speed and following distance.

Speeding

- Our speed impacts the time we have to react to changing conditions as well as the time other drivers have to react to what we are doing.
- When you are speeding, it makes it harder to stop when traffic unexpectedly comes to a halt. It also makes it more difficult to avoid a pedestrian that suddenly steps out from between cars. Speeding also makes it hard to avoid other drivers who suddenly change into your lane.
- When you are speeding, it may seem like other drivers are always turning too close in front of you or pulling out in front of you or performing any number of maneuvers to seemingly get in your way, but the reality is that it is your excessive speed that is the main contributor to each of these unsafe situations.

Following Too Closely

- In addition to maintaining a safe speed, you must also maintain a safe amount of space or a "safety buffer" around your vehicle.
- Following other vehicles too closely is extremely unsafe and often results in collisions. For instance, if a vehicle ahead suddenly stops or swerves to avoid an obstacle, the driver following too closely has little time to react.
- The traveling speed, the vehicle's weight and braking characteristics and the current road conditions all impact the safe following distance.
- In good weather and road conditions, a passenger car traveling under 40 miles per hour should maintain at least a two-second interval from the vehicle in front. You can time it yourself by counting, "One thousand one, one thousand two" when a fixed object is passed.
- As speeds increase over 40 miles per hour, this distance should be increased to three seconds. "One thousand one, one thousand two, one thousand three."
- For larger and heavier vehicles such as service vans, delivery trucks, or vehicles towing trailers, the following distance must be greater. When driving 40 miles per hour or less, these types of vehicles should allow a four-second interval from the vehicle in front.
- When driving over 40 miles per hour, such as on highways and interstates, a five second interval should be maintained.
- The ability to stop a moving vehicle, or to quickly make an evasive maneuver, is greatly impacted by road conditions. The overall following distance should be doubled on wet roads and increased by 10 times on ice and snow.
- One way to think about speed and following distance is to remind yourself that you need "time to react" and "room to maneuver" to safely avoid unexpected hazards.

Safe Driving Habits

- Defensive driving also means driving in a manner that helps prevent or avoid the need to take evasive action in the first place.
- Always use turn signals to show your intentions.
- Prior to slowing down or stopping, give other drivers advanced notice by briefly tapping the brake pedal so your brake lights flash to alert those behind you. This is crucial if the driver following you is approaching quickly or following too closely.
- Also, do not linger or drive for extended periods in another vehicle's blind spot. This leaves you susceptible to an unexpected lane change.

Aggressive Driving

- Be aware that stress, crowded roads and busy schedules have combined to produce an aggressive driving environment. Aggressive drivers often tailgate slower traffic, block others attempting to pass and honk, yell or make gestures at other drivers in their attempt to reach their destination as quickly as possible. This behavior is referred to as "road rage."
- Do not participate in this type of behavior or serve to escalate it. These types of road rage "trigger incidents" can lead drivers to intentionally perform unsafe acts directed at others, often resulting in a crash.
- While driving, strive to remain calm during any such incident and slow down, exit or change lanes to safely steer clear of aggressive or raging drivers.