

Driving Tips & Seasonal Update Training

Line of Business: Auto Liability

Risk Control Strategy / Key Issues: To establish, document and maintain a program that provides drivers with safe driving reminders and seasonal driving updates.

Suggested Program Elements:

1. **Program Statement:** Assign program responsibilities to one designated accountable person. This individual should be provided with the management resources needed to accomplish the goals as established by your organization. An individual in the transportation department (Transportation Supervisor) is a likely candidate because of the need to maintain these program records along with other driver records.

Management's reasoning for implementation of the program should be communicated in writing to all drivers within the organization. The duties and responsibilities of the designated individual should be outlined in the correspondence as well.

2. **Distribution of driving tips:** The guidelines for the process of providing safe driving tips and seasonal update training within your organization should include, but not be limited to the following activities:
 - Provide driving tips at the beginning of a work shift.
 - Provide quarterly seasonal conditions briefings to include:
 - ✓ Anticipated weather conditions
 - ✓ Anticipated road conditions
 - ✓ Anticipated needs for vehicle, equipment and driving practice changes
 - ✓ Inclement weather policy / procedures

Program Activities Calendar:

- Weekly distribution of safe driving tips
- Quarterly seasonal driver briefings

Web Site Links:

- National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
<http://www.nhtsa.gov/>
- AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety
<http://www.aaafoundation.org/home/>
- National Association for Pupil Transportation
<http://www.napt.org/>
- National School Transportation Association
<http://www.yellowbuses.org/>
- Operation Lifesaver, Inc
<http://oli.org/>

Driving Tips

BACKING UP

Have you given any thought to the “art” of backing up your vehicle? Most of us don’t because it doesn’t seem to demand special attention. Backing-up accidents are not very spectacular. Damage to vehicles is usually very slight because vehicles usually move slowly while backing up. However, the potential for bodily injury to others is just as great as it is when vehicles travel in a forward direction. The direction the vehicle is going doesn’t alter the impact on the person being struck.

Why do backing accidents occur? Many conditions that exist for other accidents are not significant in this type of occurrence. For example, road and vehicle conditions are rarely contributing factors. There is something about backing up that demands attention—impaired vision. Reduced vision to the rear of the vehicle requires drivers to use mirrors.

In most cases the driver still can’t be sure of what is behind the vehicle. If there is any question about what is there, the driver must get out and look or use an adult spotter to insure the area behind is clear. If you can park to avoid the necessity of backing up, do so.

Sure, you haven’t backed over anyone, but have you ever hit an unseen, fixed object like a low post? Many of us have, and we feel pretty foolish when we do. It could just as easily have been a child.

Think, check, and keep checking as you are backing up!

BATTERY SAFETY

What is the cause of severe battery explosions? A fully charged battery, or one being charged, will generate hydrogen gas, which is explosive. It takes as little 4% hydrogen in the air to form an explosive mixture. You can see it is very important to prevent sparking near the cell caps, since hydrogen is present.

Based on actual cases, the following are some reasons why battery explosions occur:

1. Connecting “jumper cables” directly to both battery posts instead of the positive cable (red) to the positive battery post and the ground cable (black) to a metal part on the vehicle away from the battery.
2. Connecting or removing the terminal cables while the battery charger is in the “on” position.
3. Creating a spark when connecting the cable to an improper pole.
4. Using a match or smoking close to a charging battery.
5. Fastening cables to a battery post that is damaged.
6. Installing a fully-charged battery with some switches in the “on” position.

Remember – treat a battery with respect and avoid creating a spark or other source of ignition near a battery. If you are accidentally sprayed with battery acid, immediately wash the sprayed area with large quantities of water. If the sprayed area involves the face and eyes, seek immediate medical treatment.

CITY DRIVING

Why do we single out the act of city driving? What makes traffic and highway safety consultants regard it as “an entirely different animal”? They treat it that way because it is different! City driving presents a rapidly changing variety of traffic situations and requires a number of quick decisions.

A well-designed expressway limits the problems encountered by drivers and encourages anticipation of possible hazards with a multitude of warning/caution signs. City streets do not foster a consistent progression of events which allow sufficient lead time for driver adjustments – and there are few warning signs.

What can a driver do to make city driving easier and safer? We’re all familiar with several systems that are designed to cope with this problem. They usually are called a “Defensive Driving Program”. Here are the elements they all contain:

1. **Recognize the hazard.** This means staying alert to what is happening around you. Is one of the traffic lanes ahead slowed or stopped because of an accident or a double parked delivery truck? Is a parked car about to pull out in front of you? Has a little sport vehicle or a cab zipped into the safety space you have left in front of you? Are you “boxed in”?
2. **Understand the defense.** What should you do to keep your vehicle moving and/or prevent an accident? Do you have the time and space to change lanes before there is a collision? Should you slow down or speed up to prevent an abrupt stop?
3. **Act quickly and positively.** This is not to suggest that you make snap decisions or judgments. You must consider the traffic environment and act as soon as it is safe to proceed. Practical use of defensive driving techniques in city traffic will make driving more pleasant and safer for you and your passengers; and for those with whom you share city streets.

DRIVER COURTESY

Courteous driving habits should be practiced daily – not just on our good days. Some of us reserve courtesy for vacation or off-the-job trips. We have all heard of “road rage” and see examples of it with increasing frequency. Are you one of those drivers?

Most of us rarely stop to analyze the words and phrases we hear and use daily. How do we define “courteous driving”? There is not an official definition, but we can describe it.

1. Use the correct procedures when making turns. This includes being in the correct lane well in advance, signaling your intentions and checking approaching traffic.
2. Don’t make abrupt stops unless it’s an emergency.
3. Stay in the right hand lane on four lane streets except when getting in position for a left turn or passing traffic.
4. Don’t run the yellow light traffic signal as it turns “red”.
5. Drive defensively. Be alert and ready to act to prevent an accident. Even though you are driving correctly, don’t challenge the other driver – be ready to yield as necessary to prevent an accident.

If you drive in a manner that minimizes obstruction to traffic, irritation to others and reduces the possibility of accidents, you will find driving easier, safer and more enjoyable.

Don’t fight it. Work at it. Courtesy may not be contagious or ego building, but it sure prevents accidents.

RAIN & HYDROPLANING

While on a recent trip, I had the opportunity to experience the hazards and advantages of rain. The tire treads were filled with mud and began to spin as I started from a traffic light. Traction was poor until the mud wore off my tires and erratic steering or braking could have resulted in loss of control of my vehicle. The wet streets soon washed the mud from my tires. However, my vision was obscured by a downpour that was too heavy for the windshield wipers to handle. Upon entering the freeway, I found very little traffic and was able to get the vehicle's speed up to 65 mph. Although the rainfall had lightened-up, the recent downpour had deposited a large amount of water on the pavement. I felt the vehicle sway.

Puddled water can have two effects on driving. When puddle, water is primarily on the side of the road, only your right wheels have to push water out of the way before hitting pavement. This tends to pull your vehicle to the right.

The other effect is called "hydroplaning". When traveling over a film of water at speeds over 45 mph, the tires tend to lift off the pavement and ride on the surface of water like water-skis. Under tests made by NASA, films showed non-powered wheels slowed their rotation. You can imagine the effect on steering if one of your steering tires has slowed, then suddenly hit pavement. You can also visualize what happens to your rig if you have to veer to the right or left while you are hydroplaning. The effect is similar to driving on ice.

The remedy for all of these conditions is to reduce your speed and anticipate the problems associated with precipitation. I drove out of the storm and was now ahead of it. This was the most dangerous part of the passing squall; for here, dry pavement was receiving its first rain in many days. The dust and oil that had been collecting on the surface of the road since the last storm had turned into a slippery film. There's a lot of rain ahead, and it's all followed by sunshine. Be sure you have a chance to enjoy that sunshine by driving safely through the rain.

NIGHT VISION

There is a lot more on the road than meets the eye. This is especially true at night. It is all too easy to forget that night driving presents a whole new set of hazards. Nobody is perfect and our visual imperfections are increased with the onset of darkness.

What are some of the problems for night drivers?

- Smoking reduces night vision by 10 percent.
- Drinking alcohol decreases the oxygen supply to the eyes, reducing vision.
- Wearing sunglasses at night, done by some drivers to cut glare, reduces overall night vision. (Regular glasses can have an "antiglare" coating applied that helps this problem.)
- Improper maintenance of windshield wipers, windows, headlights or exhaust systems can add to the danger of night driving. (Good pre-trip inspections are the key.)
- Age – drivers over the age of 40 require about 150% more light to see the same as those under the age of 40. (We can't stop aging, but we need to be aware of the problem and increase our level of caution as we grow older.)

Over 29,000 people, including 9,400 pedestrians, are killed each year on the road at night. These facts alone should be enough to get your attention. Night driving requires increased alertness and extra care.

TIME DRIVING RULE

Student transporters live by the “Time Driving Rule” because they know it assists them in completing a safe trip. Drivers of student transportation know fatigue is an important factor in defensive driving and preventing motor vehicle accidents.

The Time Driving rule was established to assist in avoiding fatigue driving. The Federal Highway Administration has released the following information about fatigue patterns emerging in the trucking industry.

- In general, human motor skills begin to get worse after six hours of being awake.
- Twice as many accidents occur in the second half of trips than in the first half (regardless of trip length).
- Truck drivers are four times more likely to have an accident after 14 hours of driving than after 10 hours.
- The number of truck accidents peaks in the period between 4 a.m. and 6 a.m. This is directly related to the body’s biological clock.

The student transporter does not drive a bus after completing 10 hours of driving nor will they drive a bus after completing 15 hours of duty following 8 consecutive off duty because they know fatigue will impair their ability to perform in a safe and prudent manner. They will simply not drive, because it is no longer safe to do so. They will not falsify their driver’s daily log sheet so they can get back in the driver’s seat.

Student transporters are not confused by the rules. Driving time is the total time spent behind the wheel driving the bus. On-duty time is all time spent from the time the driver begins work or is required to be in readiness to work until they are relieved from work. This time includes time waiting to be dispatched, equipment inspection, driving time, loading or unloading, accidents, repairs or performing any work related to the transporting of students. The time spent supervising or obtaining assistance in performing any of the above-mentioned tasks qualifies as on-duty time.

Student transporters believe in the Time Driving Rule because they are concerned about the well-being of their passengers, other motorists and themselves.

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