

Safety Toolbox Talk

DEFENSIVE DRIVING

When you're at the controls of any vehicle, it is important to remember that defensive driving is a full-time job. The most dangerous mile you have to drive is the one directly ahead of you.

Anyone can drive perfectly for 10 feet or 100 feet or even one mile, but it takes a real professional to drive perfectly for 100,000 miles or more. To be a professional driver there are many things you must observe and practice.

A safe driver is not merely someone who has been lucky enough to avoid injury, but is one who drives defensively and looks out for others. But today's driving standards demand more skill, knowledge and decision-making ability.



Drivers who are safety-conscious have developed good habits and practice them daily. Every time they get behind the wheel, their driving licence and record is on the line. They must drive like a professional and be prepared mentally and physically.

If you are a driver who has a safe attitude about your driving, you will be able to drive with a sense of security in inclement weather, on difficult roads and through heavy traffic.

In addition, to be a good driver you should respect all traffic laws and be courteous to others.

When bad weather affects driving conditions, you must adjust your driving time and habits. Driving on wet or slippery roads is not the same as driving on dry surfaces. The number of traffic events and injuries and cars running off the road during wet weather could be reduced if drivers would anticipate the slippery road conditions and adjust their driving habits.

Stay a safe distance from the vehicle in front of you. Start stopping sooner. Apply your brakes the instant you see a hazard developing, but apply them gradually so you don't go into a spin or even stop so quickly that you risk a rear-end collision.

Defensive driving is driving to prevent injury, despite the incorrect actions of others or adverse weather conditions.

ANTICIPATE driving hazards and know how to protect yourself from them. Be alert while driving by keeping your mind free of distractions and your attention focused on driving; alertness involves watching and recognizing hazards instantly. The professional driver has foresight, the ability to size up traffic situations as far ahead as possible. The driver must ANTICIPATE traffic problems that are likely to develop and decide whether these developments could be dangerous.

Many drivers fail to understand why the term "preventable" is used for an injury or event when they were not legally at fault. A preventable injury or event is one in which you fail to do everything you reasonably could have done to prevent it. Even though the driver cited with a preventable injury or event did not violate any traffic laws, the professional driver should have seen or anticipated the incorrect actions of the other driver in time to take actions to prevent the accident from happening. However, you may also learn the valuable lessons that near misses offer, and make the necessary adjustments in your driving habits.

As a defensive driver you must operate your vehicle in such a manner as to avoid contributing to an event or being involved in a preventable event.

Awareness of the vehicle's limitations is essential; pre-journey checklists and inspections can familiarise you with the vehicle and point out things that might need attention.

Don't be in a hurry - you're just asking for trouble.

The safe, reliable, and economical performance of your car will depend largely on how well it is maintained.

In addition to the routine services and inspections, the following simple checks should be carried out more frequently:

Daily checks:

- Operation of lights, horn, direction indicators, wipers, washers and warning lights.
- Operation of seat belts and brakes.
- Look for fluid deposits on the floor beneath the car, which may indicate a fluid leak.

Weekly checks:

- Engine oil level.
- Cooling system level.
- Operate air conditioning.
- Condition and pressure of tyres.
- Brake and power steering fluid checks.
- Screen washer reservoir level.

When was the last time you made these checks?

QUESTIONS – (there may be more than one correct answer)

		A	B	C
1	What will help to make a safe driver?	Someone who is lucky	Someone who drives defensively	Will depend on the age of the car
2	The main point of defensive driving is to prevent what?	Damage to property	Injury	Points on your licence
3	What do you need to anticipate?	Where speed cameras may be located	Driving hazards	Traffic problems
4	What is a preventable event?	An injury/event where you are legally at fault	Violation of traffic law	You failed to do anything reasonable to prevent it happening
5	What is the purpose of the middle and outside lanes of a motorway?	To avoid slow moving traffic	To maintain maximum speed	Overtaking only

