

Defensive Driving

For Noncommercial Motorists



BLR
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Slide Show Notes

- Whether you drive on the job or just commute to work by car, you're in danger on the road unless you drive defensively. Motor vehicle accidents are the number one cause of accidental death in the United States. They are also the number one cause of work-related fatalities.
- Today, we're going to talk about defensive driving techniques that will help you avoid traffic accidents so you will always arrive at your destination safe and sound.

Session Objectives

You will be able to:

- Identify driving hazards
- Understand defensive driving techniques
- Use defensive driving techniques to prevent accidents and injuries on the road

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The main purpose of this session is to talk about defensive driving techniques so that you can be safe behind the wheel and avoid accidents. By the time this session is over, you will be able to:

- Identify driving hazards;
- Understand defensive driving techniques; *and*
- Use defensive driving techniques to prevent accidents and injuries on the road.

Driving Safety Statistics

- Someone is injured every 18 seconds
- Over 2 million injuries annually are disabling
- A person dies in a crash every 11 minutes
- Motor vehicle accidents are the most common cause of death
- 1 in 4 fatal work injuries involves a vehicle accident



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When you think of work-related safety hazards, you probably think about what goes on inside the workplace. But one of the greatest threats to your safety is not in the workplace, but rather on the road.

- Someone is injured every 18 seconds.
 - Over 2 million of those injuries turn out to be disabling.
 - A person dies in a crash on U.S. roads every 11 minutes.
 - In fact, motor vehicle accidents are the most common cause of death in the United States—more than cancer or heart attacks.
 - And, one in four work fatalities involves a motor vehicle accident.
- These statistics are cause for concern. They also provide the explanation for this safety training session. We don't want you to become a statistic.

Have you or anyone you know ever been involved in a motor vehicle accident? Most people have had at least a fender bender. Think about the consequences of a serious accident. It could change your life—and not for the better.

Ask trainees to talk about motor vehicle accidents in which they or someone they know has been involved. What happened? Were there serious injuries? What have they learned from the accidents they've been in, heard about, or even just seen on the highway?

Driving Hazards: Human Error

- Reckless driving
- Distracted driving
- Fatigue
- Aggressive driving
- Failure to keep vehicles in good operating condition
- Driving under the influence



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Here are some key driving hazards caused by human error:

- Reckless driving, such as speeding, weaving through traffic, ignoring signs and signals, tailgating, and dangerous passing;
- Distracted driving including using cell phones, putting on make-up, eating or drinking, writing or reading, or getting wrapped up in thoughts or emotions and failing to pay attention to the road;
- Fatigue that results in poor judgment and slow reaction times;
- Aggressive driving, having to get there first and cutting people off, blowing horns, flashing lights, and making obscene or angry gestures at anyone who gets in the way;
- Failure to maintain vehicles in good operating condition, such as driving with brakes that aren't working effectively, lights that are out, and bald tires; *and*
- Of course, driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs, which is responsible for about one-third of all road accidents.

Have you seen any of these hazards on the road recently?

Ask trainees to talk about their own driving experiences recently, identifying which of these hazards they've seen on the road.

Driving Hazards: Dangerous Conditions

- Bad weather
- Difficult road conditions
- Poor light or glare
- Heavy traffic
- Road work
- Accidents



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In addition to hazards caused by human error, you may also have to contend with hazards caused by dangerous road and weather conditions. For example:

- Bad weather conditions, such as rain, fog, wind, snow, or ice;
- Difficult road conditions, such as sharp curves, busy intersections, uneven surfaces, or obstacles in the road;
- Poor light at night or glare during the day;
- Heavy traffic, with a lot of stop and go, people changing lanes, and so on;
- Road work, with reduced or narrowed lanes; *or*
- Accidents, which can cause dangerous conditions for drivers approaching the accident scene.

Seat Belts

- Saved over 100,000 lives
- Prevent crashing into steering wheel, dash, or windshield
- Keep you inside vehicle
- Protect body organs
- Improve chance of remaining conscious
- Keep you behind the wheel if you have to swerve or brake suddenly



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- If you're involved in a traffic accident because of driving hazards and bad conditions, you could suffer serious injuries or even be killed. Fortunately, we have a simple but very effective means to protect ourselves in the event of a motor vehicle accident. We're talking, of course, about seat belts. In the past 25 to 30 years, seat belts have saved over 100,000 lives.
- A properly worn seat belt will prevent you from hitting the steering wheel, dash, or windshield.
- It will also keep you inside the vehicle, which increases your chances of survival. You're 25 times more likely to be killed if you're thrown from a vehicle during an accident.
- Seat belts are also designed to use your body's strong bones to absorb shock, rather than damaging delicate internal organs.
- Wearing a seat belt will increase your chance of remaining conscious after a crash, which will help you get out of the vehicle and you can help others.
- Finally, a seat belt keeps you in control of your vehicle if you are forced to swerve or brake suddenly.

Do you always buckle up when you get behind the wheel? You should.

Ask for a show of hands to see how many trainees always wear a seat belt. Emphasize that those who drive on the job must wear seat belts.

Vehicle Maintenance

- Regular tune-ups
- Oil changes
- Fluid levels
- Brakes
- Tire treads and pressure
- Lights, signals, and wipers



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- We mentioned earlier that one significant driving hazard is vehicles in poor operating condition. To eliminate this hazard, maintain your vehicle by following the maintenance schedule outlined in your owner's manual. For example, perform tune-ups regularly and change the oil every 3,000 miles.
- Check and maintain proper fluid levels for coolant, brake fluid, and power steering fluid. Don't forget to keep the windshield washer tank full so you don't run out when you need it.
- Have your brakes inspected according to the schedule in the owner's manual, and replace brakes as necessary.
- Check your tires to make sure they are properly inflated and still have sufficient tread. Rotate tires every 10,000 miles so that they wear evenly, and change tires as necessary.
- Also be sure your lights, signals, and wipers are all working properly.

Do you follow the maintenance schedule outlined in the owner's manual for your vehicle? Is your vehicle always in safe condition when you hit the road?

Ask trainees if they follow proper maintenance schedules and keep their vehicles in good, safe operating condition at all times?

Pre-Drive Inspection

- Walkaround inspection
- Tires
- Leaks under vehicle
- Windows clean, nothing blocking vision
- Mirrors properly adjusted
- Lights working properly



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In addition to regular maintenance, you should always give your vehicle a quick visual inspection before you hit the road.

- Walk around the vehicle before you get in to make sure there's nothing behind or underneath that you might run over.
- Give the tires a quick glance.
- Check for any leaks under the vehicle.
- When you get in the vehicle, make sure the windows are clean and that there's nothing blocking your vision.
- Also make sure both rearview and side mirrors are properly adjusted.
- Finally, be sure all outside and inside lights work properly—including turn signals.

Carrying a Load?

- Don't overload your vehicle
- Make sure everyone has a seat and a seat belt
- Make sure cargo is properly secured
- Be certain your vision is not blocked



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- If you're carrying a load of any kind—either people or cargo—make sure not to overload your vehicle.
- Make sure every person in the vehicle has a seat and a seat belt. Don't allow doubling up or trying to squeeze more people into the vehicle than it can accommodate safely.
- Make sure cargo is properly secured so it won't shift around while you're driving.
- Also make sure that cargo doesn't block your vision and that you can see out of all windows.

**Driving Hazards:
ID Test**

Identify three driving hazards caused by human error

- Reckless driving
- Distracted driving
- Fatigue
- Aggressive driving
- Vehicles in poor operating condition
- Driving under the influence

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Now let's see how well you remember the driving hazards we've just talked about.

- Can you identify three driving hazards caused by human error? Driving hazards caused by human error include reckless driving, distracted driving, fatigue, aggressive driving, failure to keep vehicles in good operating condition, and driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs.



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Can you identify three driving hazards caused by dangerous conditions?

Driving hazards caused by dangerous conditions include:

- Bad weather
- Difficult road conditions, including sharp curves, busy intersections, uneven surfaces, or obstacles
- Poor light or glare
- Heavy traffic
- Road work
- Accidents

How did you do? Were you able to ID the hazards correctly?

Driving Hazards

- Do you understand the variety of driving hazards you could face on the road?



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- Now it's time to ask yourself if you understand the information presented so far. Do you understand what we've discussed about the variety of driving hazards you could face on the road?

It's important for you to understand driving hazards so that you can appreciate the risks and be motivated to take the defensive driving precautions we're going to talk about in the second part of this training session.

Answer any questions trainees have about the information presented in the previous slides.

Conduct an exercise, if appropriate.

Now let's continue to the next slide and talk about avoiding collisions.

Avoid Collisions

- Head-on collisions
- Hit from behind
- Hitting the driver in front
- Side collisions



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Two-car collisions are among the most common kind of traffic accident. About one-third of two-car collisions occur at intersections, so be especially careful when entering an intersection.

- Head-on collisions are particularly dangerous and can be deadly. The key to avoiding them is to keep looking ahead down the road for possible problems. If a crash looks like it's coming, slow down and even go off the road to the right to avoid a head-on crash.
- Rear-end collisions are also dangerous, but they, too, are preventable. For example:
 - Signal your intentions when stopping or turning;
 - Be alert for tailgaters;
 - Slow down gradually; and
 - Leave room in front of you when stopped so that if you are hit from behind, at least you won't hit another vehicle in front.
- To avoid colliding with a vehicle in front, take these precautions:
 - Look well ahead for hazards, brake lights, and turn signals; and
 - Always maintain sufficient distance between you and the vehicle in front so that you have enough room to stop safely.
- To avoid side collisions, be sure to approach all intersections with caution. Always look both ways before proceeding—even if you have right-of-way.

Obey Traffic Rules And Use Common Sense

- Speed limits
- Traffic signs and signals
- Follow the 2-second rule
- Signal your intentions
- Pass with care and only where allowed



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- Defensive drivers obey traffic rules and use common sense. We hope you are a defensive driver.
- We hope you always obey speed limits, traffic signs, and signals.
- We also hope that you follow the 2 second rule. This means you should always stay at least 2 seconds behind the vehicle in front—and allow more distance at night or in bad weather. How can you tell if you're 2 seconds behind another vehicle? Simple. Just note when the vehicle in front passes a traffic sign or utility pole. Then slowly count 1, 2. If you pass the sign or pole before you've counted 2, you're too close.
- Another thing defensive drivers do is signal their intentions. If you're going to turn or want to change lanes, switch on your turning signal in plenty of time. If you plan to stop, tap your brakes a few times to slow down so that the driver behind you can see your brake lights and then he will understand that you're slowing down and may stop. If somebody's right behind you, stick your arm out the window, extend it downward, and wave your hand backward to show you intend to stop.
- Defensive drivers also pass with care and only where allowed. They slow down when being passed if the other vehicle needs room to pass safely.

Keep Alert and Be Prepared

- Keep your mind on your driving and your hands on the wheel
- Scan the road ahead for problems
- Check mirrors frequently
- Expect the unexpected
- Yield to other drivers who are determined to get there first

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- Defensive drivers are also alert and focused on their driving and prepared for anything that might occur on the road. Being a defensive driver means keeping your mind on your driving and your hands on the wheel. You can't be talking on the phone, thinking about other things, fiddling with the radio or CD player, or carrying on animated conversations with passengers.
- You also have to constantly look well ahead for changes in traffic or road conditions. If you see brake lights ahead, slow down and be prepared to stop.
- Keep an eye on what's going on behind you. Check your mirrors frequently for oncoming vehicles.
- Always expect the unexpected when driving. That way, you'll never be surprised and you'll always be in control. Watch for other drivers making sudden moves. Keep alert for pedestrians, bicyclists, and animals darting out in front of you.
- If you're a defensive driver, you'll also yield to other drivers instead of challenging them to a dangerous duel.

Think about the way you drive. Do you always use the defensive driving techniques we've discussed in this and the previous slides?

Ask trainees to talk about the defensive driving techniques they use.

Adjust to Weather And Road Conditions

- Slow down
- Turn on lights and wipers
- Increase following distance to 4 seconds
- Avoid puddles
- Beware of misty rain after a dry spell
- Be prepared to handle a skid safely
- Beware of icy patches



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When the weather or road conditions are bad, you need to adjust your driving accordingly to prevent accidents.

- Drive more slowly.
- Turn on your lights and wipers, if necessary.
- Increase following distance from 2 to 4 seconds in bad weather or when road conditions are poor.
- Avoid puddles. They can hide damaging potholes and get your brakes wet, which can make it harder to stop in an emergency.
- Be cautious when there is a light, misty rain after a dry spell. This moisture mixes with road oil to create a slick surface.
- Be prepared to handle a skid. If you skid, take your foot off the gas and turn the wheel in the direction you want the front of the car to go. Use a light touch, and keep your foot off the brake. For example, the back of your car is skidding to the right. That means the front of the car is heading to the left. To regain control and come out of the skid safely, you should turn the wheel gently to the right.
- One last defensive driving technique for bad weather during the winter months—beware of icy patches. Remember—bridges, overpasses, and shady spots are most likely to freeze first and stay frozen longest.

Be Extra Careful at Night

- Keep windshield clean to improve vision
- Turn lights on 1/2 hour before sunset
- Increase following distance to 4 seconds
- Be extra careful on curves and at intersections
- Switch from high to low beams to keep from blinding other drivers
- If you have trouble, pull completely off the road and use flashers

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Slide Show Notes

Driving at night adds extra hazards and is often more stressful. To reduce the risk of having an accident when driving after dark, be sure to take these precautions.

- First of all, start with a clean windshield and clean rear and side windows to improve vision.
- Next, turn your lights on one-half hour before sunset—or earlier if it's a dark day.
- Increase your following distance to 4 seconds at night.
- Be extra careful on dark curves and at intersections.
- Be a courteous as well as a safe driver by switching from high to low beams if there's a car in front of you or one coming toward you. If a driver coming the other way isn't so courteous, look briefly off to the right side of the road to avoid the blinding glare.
- If you have car trouble at night, pull completely off the road and use your emergency flashers. You should also have flares or fluorescent triangles in your vehicle that you can use so oncoming traffic is aware of your position.

Driving at night can be dangerous, and many accidents occur after dark. Do you always take these precautions when driving at night?

Ask trainees to describe the extra precautions they take when driving at night.

Watch Out for Fatigue

- Be especially careful during late night, early morning, and mid-afternoon hours
- Stop, take a nap, and drink coffee if you're tired
- Stop every so often over long distances
- Avoid medications that cause drowsiness



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Traffic safety experts say that fatigued or drowsy driving may be a factor in more than 100,000 crashes every year—crashes that result in 40,000 injuries and more than 1,500 deaths. A National Sleep Foundation study finds that 51 percent of adults admit to driving while drowsy, and 17 percent report having fallen asleep at the wheel.

To prevent accidents due to fatigue, take some simple precautions.

- Be especially careful late at night, early in the morning, and during the mid-afternoon hours when drowsy driving accidents are most likely to happen.
- Stop and take a short nap of 15 or 20 minutes if you're tired and having trouble keeping your eyes open. Have a cup of coffee or other caffeinated drink, too.
- When driving long distances, get out of your vehicle every couple of hours to stretch and refresh. Also, set realistic and safe daily mileage goals.
- Avoid medications that cause drowsiness if you have to drive.

Have you ever driven while drowsy? Have you ever almost fallen asleep at the wheel? Remember these tips to avoid accidents when you're tired.

Ask for a show of hands to indicate how many trainees have driven while drowsy. Remind them of the hazards and urge them to take the precautions discussed in this slide to prevent accidents.

Keep Cool in Traffic

- Keep your emotions in check
- Take steps to stay relaxed no matter what
- Allow enough time to get there
- Don't provoke other drivers
- Report aggressive drivers to the police



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Slide Show Notes

Aggressive driving and road rage have become a national epidemic. Defensive drivers don't engage in it or encourage it.

- So, no matter how bad the traffic is or how frustrated you get, try to keep your emotions in check. Strong emotions have no place on the road. They can make you take risks and make foolish decisions that can get you killed.
- Take steps to stay relaxed, such as taking deep breaths when irritated, listening to soothing music, and remembering not to take the actions of other drivers personally.
- Always allow enough time to reach your destination safely. Check traffic reports and try to avoid congested areas.
- Don't provoke, challenge, or even respond to aggressive drivers. Move out of their way, avoid eye contact, and don't respond to rude gestures or abusive language.
- If an aggressive driver persists in challenging you, report the incident to the police, providing vehicle description, plate number, location, and direction of travel.

Have you ever encountered an aggressive driver on the road or acted aggressively yourself? Remember the points in this slide.

Ask trainees to talk about their experiences with aggressive driving.

Don't Drink or Take Drugs and Drive

Alcohol and drugs impair:

- Ability to determine distances
- Reaction time
- Judgment
- Vision

Remember:

- Only time, not coffee, will sober you up
- Ride with a designated driver



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Slide Show Notes

Every year people are injured or killed on the road because another driver was driving under the influence. Defensive drivers *never* drink or take drugs and drive. They understand that alcohol and drugs impair your:

- Ability to determine distances;
- Reaction time;
- Judgment; *and*
- Vision.

So remember:

- Coffee won't sober you up. Only time can do that. You have to wait at least an hour for each drink you've consumed—including beer and wine—before it's safe to drive.
- If you've been drinking, ride with someone who hasn't.

If You're Involved In an Accident

- Move to the side of the road and turn off the ignition
- Perform a first-aid check
- Call the police
- Collect insurance and registration information, and get a copy of the police report
- Draw a sketch of the accident scene
- Don't point blame or discuss fault

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If, despite your best efforts, you're involved in a traffic accident, remember that most people will be upset and emotions will be high.

So try to remain calm and take these steps:

- First, move to the side of the road, if possible, and turn off the ignition.
- Next, perform a first-aid check on all drivers and passengers.
- Call the police and report your location and any injuries that require emergency medical services.
- When the police arrive on the scene, collect insurance and registration information from the other driver, and make sure to ask the police to send you a copy of their report.
- Draw a quick sketch or take a picture of the accident scene and jot down your recollection of exactly how the accident happened.
- Finally, don't point blame or discuss fault—leave it to the insurance companies to work out the details.

Defensive Driving Techniques: True or False

- T** You should keep 2 to 4 seconds behind the vehicle in front.
- F** If you go into a skid, turn the wheel in the opposite direction of the skid.
- F** If you've had too much to drink, a couple of cups of coffee will sober you up.
- T** Many drowsy driving accidents occur in mid-afternoon hours.

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Now let's take a little true/false quiz to see how much you've learned about defensive driving techniques.

- You should keep 2 to 4 seconds behind the vehicle in front. True or false? The correct answer is true. Allow more distance in bad weather or at night.
- If you go into a skid, turn the wheel in the opposite direction of the skid. True or false? The correct answer is false. Turn the wheel in the direction you want the front of the vehicle to go.
- If you've had too much to drink, a couple of cups of coffee will sober you up. True or false? The correct answer is false. Coffee won't sober you up. Only time will. Allow at least 1 hour for each drink before driving.
- Many drowsy driving accidents occur in mid-afternoon hours. True or false? The correct answer is true. Drowsy driving accidents also frequently occur early in the morning and late at night.

How did you do? Did you get all the answers right?

Defensive Driving Techniques

- Do you understand the information about defensive driving techniques?



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- Do you understand the information we've just discussed about defensive driving techniques? Using these techniques on the road can help you prevent accidents so you can get where you're going safely every day.

Answer any questions trainees have about the information presented in the previous slides.

Conduct an exercise, if appropriate.

Now let's conclude the session with some key points to remember.

KEY POINTS To Remember!

- Know the driving hazards you can face on the road
- Maintain your vehicle in good condition
- Always wear a seat belt
- Follow traffic rules and obey signs and signals
- Be a safe and defensive driver every day
- Know how to respond to an accident

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Slide Show Notes

Here are the main points to remember from this session on defensive driving:

- Know the driving hazards you can face on the road;
- Maintain your vehicle in good condition;
- Always wear a seat belt;
- Follow traffic rules and obey signs and signals;
- Be a safe and defensive driver every day; *and*
- Know how to respond to an accident.

This concludes the defensive driving training session.

Give trainees the quiz, if appropriate.

KEY POINTS To Remember!

- For more information on driving safely, contact the Chapman University Risk Manager.
 - Allan F. Brooks, CPCU, ARM
 - Risk Manager
 - 714-532-7794; abrooks@chapman.edu
- For more information on use of Chapman University fleet vehicles, contact the Supervisor, Parking and Transportation Services in the Chapman University Public Safety Office
 - Sheryl Boyd, BAOL
 - Supervisor, Parking and Transportation Services
 - (714) 997-6560; sboyd@chapman.edu

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Slide Show Notes

Here are the main points to remember from this session on defensive driving:

- Know the driving hazards you can face on the road;
- Maintain your vehicle in good condition;
- Always wear a seat belt;
- Follow traffic rules and obey signs and signals;
- Be a safe and defensive driver every day; *and*
- Know how to respond to an accident.

This concludes the defensive driving training session.

Give trainees the quiz, if appropriate.