



SAFETY BULLETIN

SAVING MONEY THROUGH SAFE DRIVING

Auto accidents cost everyone. Auto accidents cost employers \$60,000,000,000 annually in medical care, legal expenses, property damage and lost productivity. There are costs associated with accidents that are not work related. When one of your employees gets into an accident off the job, it costs you if they are not able to get to work or if they are injured and cannot return to work immediately. It is good policy to instruct all of your employees in safe defensive driving habits. According to the National Safety Council, there are four fatal driving errors. They are Speeding, Right of Way, Driving Left of Center, and Tailgating.

Speeding is a contributing factor in approximately 13,500 deaths per year. It is the number one unsafe driving behavior. All drivers need to follow the speed limit. Sometimes, we get in a hurry or have that feeling that we are pressed for time. Ask yourself, "What will my speeding gain?" How much time can you make up doing ten miles per hour over the speed limit in a 100 mile trip? If the speed limit is 50, it will take two hours, at 60 it will take 1 hour 49 minutes. What will eleven minutes gain you in a 100 mile trip? If you are cutting your time that close, leave earlier.

Right of way accidents are the next most common contributing factor in accidents. Sometimes, drivers think that they have the right of way. The law does not give anyone the right of way; it only says that at times we must yield the right of way. Most right of way accidents happen at intersections because drivers fail to yield, disregard traffic signals, or run a stop sign. About 30% of drivers admit to running red lights and 26% admit to rolling through stop signs. To help prevent intersection accidents, drivers should do the following: Look right, left and right again before proceeding through an intersection, delay at least two seconds before proceeding when the light turns green, and at least two seconds before following the car in front of you through a green light. This will give the driver some reaction time if the car in front suddenly stops or if someone is running their red light.

Driving left of center means that the driver is hugging the center line. This can confuse oncoming drivers, cause you to be sideswiped, or cause oncoming drivers to think you are coming across the line, leading them to take evasive action that can lead to an accident. We tend to hug the center line if we are going to pass the vehicle in front of us. Before you pass, ask yourself if it is really necessary to pass. Remember, you are not allowed to go above the speed limit when passing, so to do it legally, in most cases, it will take a great distance to get around the vehicle in front of you. If you have someone trying to get around you, let them get around. Don't be afraid of using turnouts.

Tailgating is the obvious cause of most rear end accidents. The safe following speed for a car is three seconds behind the vehicle in front of you. Five seconds is the safe distance for a truck or loaded pickup. To determine the safe distance, count off three seconds when the rear bumper of the vehicle in front of you passes a stationary object like a sign post. If you pass the sign post before three seconds are up, you are following too close.

Impaired driving is another leading cause of accidents. The impairment can be fatigue, distractions, alcohol, drugs (over the counter, prescription and recreational) and the human condition. If you are tired, if possible let someone else drive or pull over and refresh yourself with a walk or nap. **DO NOT DRINK AND DRIVE.** If you have a drink, the only way to get the alcohol out of your system is time. Be aware of the side effects of any drugs you are taking.

Driving is a serious matter, you are not only putting your life on the line when you get behind the wheel, you are putting other lives on the line as well. Many innocent people are injured and killed every year in auto accidents.

Be a defensive driver, and don't become a statistic.

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