



Toolbox Talks

Spotlight on Safety



Road Rage/Aggressive Drivers

"In approximately 4,400 of the 10,037 known aggressive driving incidents, the perpetrator used a firearm, knife, club, fist, feet, or other standard weapon for the attack. In approximately 2,300 cases, the aggressive driver used an even more powerful weapon—his or her own vehicle."—AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety

Simply put, road rage is a hostile exchange between drivers that is started by the display of aggressive driving tactics (weaving and merging with little space to spare, driving too slow [delaying] or too fast, tailgating, etc.) Common exchanges include rude gestures or shouting, and can escalate into threatening movements of the vehicles (designed to intimidate or cause damage).

There are two types of drivers involved in this type of behavior: the aggressor and the responder.

Aggressor—typically, these are drivers who are:

- ▲ Emotionally upset, late for an appointment (rushing)
- ▲ Distracted from their driving by loud music, cellular phone conversations, etc.
- ▲ Seeking a thrill from their driving activity (darting in and out of lanes, speeding, etc.)

Aggressors' frustration levels are high and their level of concern for the safety of fellow motorists is low. They run traffic signals, speed, tailgate, weave in and out of traffic, pass on the right, make improper and unsafe lane changes, make hand and facial gestures, scream, honk, and regularly flash their lights.

Responder—although typically calm, these drivers are easily provoked by the actions of others and will return aggressive behaviors. Sometimes they feel the need to step in to "enforce the rules of the road."

How Can Drivers Protect Themselves?

Avoid becoming an aggressor. Emotional upset and personal problems can be underestimated or unrealized. If possible, work with an Employee Assistance Program to get help with personal problems.

Be a good driver, set the proper example by neither "enforcing" rules of the road on others nor breaking the rules yourself—no matter the potential justification. You need to be patient and keep cool in traffic. Don't become a responder.

Tips about being confronted by aggressors:

- ▲ Make every attempt to get out of the way.
- ▲ Put your pride in the back seat. Do not challenge them by speeding up or attempting to hold your own in your travel lane.
- ▲ Wear your seat belt! It will hold you in your seat and behind the wheel in case you need to make an abrupt driving maneuver, and it will protect you in a crash.
- ▲ Avoid eye contact.
- ▲ Ignore gestures and refuse to return them.
- ▲ Report aggressive drivers to the appropriate authorities by providing a vehicle description, license number, location, and if possible, direction of travel.
- ▲ Assume other drivers' mistakes are not personal.
- ▲ Understand that you can't control the traffic, only your reaction to it.
- ▲ If you are tempted to participate in a driving duel, ask yourself: "Is it worth being paralyzed or killed? Is it worth a jail sentence?" An impulsive action could ruin the rest of your life.

Your personal commitment to safety can save your life when other drivers act carelessly.

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