



Driving Defensively

More than 41,000 people lose their lives in motor vehicle crashes each year and over 2.4 million more suffer disabling injuries, according to the National Safety Council. The quadruple threat of distractions, high speeds, impaired or careless driving and not using occupant restraints threatens every driver—regardless of how careful or how skilled.

Driving defensively means not only taking responsibility for yourself and your actions but also keeping an eye on "the other guy." The National Safety Council suggests the following guidelines to help reduce your risks on the road.

- Don't start the engine without securing each passenger in the car, including children and pets. Safety belts save thousands of lives each year! Lock all doors.
- Remember that driving too fast or too slow can increase the likelihood of collisions.
- Don't kid yourself. If you plan to drink, designate a driver who won't drink. Alcohol is a factor in over 40 percent of all fatal motor vehicle crashes.
- Do not use cell phones (including hands free) or any other mobile electronic devices while operating a motor vehicle. This includes, but is not limited to, answering or making phone calls, engaging in phone conversations, reading or responding to e-mails and text messages, adjusting a Global Positioning System (GPS) and accessing the internet.
- Be alert! If you notice that a car is straddling the center line, weaving, making wide turns, stopping abruptly or responding slowly to traffic signals, the driver may be impaired.
- Avoid an impaired driver by turning right at the nearest corner or exiting at the nearest exit. If it appears that an oncoming car is crossing into your lane, pull over to the roadside, sound the horn and flash your lights.
- Notify the police immediately after seeing a motorist who is driving suspiciously.
- Follow the rules of the road. Don't contest the "right of way" or try to race another car during a merge. Be respectful of other motorists.
- Don't follow too closely. Always use a "three-second following distance" or a "three-second plus following distance."
- While driving, be cautious, aware and responsible.