

DEFENSIVE DRIVING - HABITS TO DEVELOP  
SIXTEEN STEPS TO MINIMIZE RISK AND MAXIMIZE CONTROL

1. ESTABLISH AND MAINTAIN A 4 SECOND FOLLOWING DISTANCE. (Keep 4 seconds of open space ahead of you.)
  - \* Protects you from sudden stops ahead.
  - \* Enables you to see far beyond the car ahead of you.
  - \* Makes you more visible to other drivers.
  - \* You do not lose time. Establish a 4 second following distance, and then just stay with the traffic flow.
2. LOOK AT LEAST 12 - 15 SECONDS AHEAD OF YOUR VEHICLE.
  - \* At 30MPH, 12 – 15 seconds ahead represents 1 ½ football fields!
  - \* At 60MPH, it is 3 football fields!
  - \* Project vision far down your intended path of travel for smooth tracking.
  - \* If you cannot see this far ahead... SLOW DOWN!
3. DELAY YOUR START FROM BEHIND ANOTHER STOPPED CAR
  - \* Count 2 seconds before easing your car into motion; this gives you necessary reaction time if the car ahead comes to a sudden stop again.
  - \* Helps to create a following distance.
4. TIRE CONCEPT: WHEN STOPPED BEHIND ANOTHER CAR, BE FAR ENOUGH BACK SO THAT YOU CAN **EASILY** SEE WHERE THE REAR TIRES OF THE CAR AHEAD MEET THE PAVEMENT.
  - \* If threatened from behind, you have escape options. You can ease forward, or leave lane.
  - \* If you are struck from behind, it is less likely that you will be knocked into the vehicle ahead of you.
  - \* When starting off on a steep hill, it becomes less likely that the vehicle ahead will roll back into you.
5. CHECK REARVIEW MIRROR BEFORE STOPPING, TURNING, OR CHANGING LANES.
  - \* Rear end collisions account for over 20% of all traffic crashes.
  - \* If a car is close behind...
    - Brake earlier!
    - Signal earlier!
    - Slow more gradually!
  - \* When waiting to make a left turn, KEEP YOUR WHEELS STRAIGHT! This will insure you will remain in your lane if you are struck from behind.

## 6. GAIN CONTROL OVER TAILGATERS

- \* Maintain 4 seconds of space ahead of you. (This allows for more gradual stops)
- \* Signal earlier.
- \* Brake earlier.
- \* Ride to the right of your lane to allow tailgater to see beyond you.
- \* If it gets ridiculous, pull off the road and allow the tailgater to pass.

## 7. CHECK “BLIND SPOT” BEFORE LEAVING CURB OR BEFORE CHANGING LANES.

- \* Mirrors are great but do not show you everything.
- \* You must make a quick glance to the side (head check) before any lateral movement with your car.

## 8. AVOID “BLIND SPOT” DRIVING

- \* Stay out of other driver’s “blind spots”.
- \* If you find yourself in a blind spot...
  - Accelerate
  - Decelerate
  - Change lanes

## 9. TIME ARRIVALS WHEN APPROACHING STOPPING SITUATIONS. THE COLOR RED MEANS STOP, YIELD, OR PROHIBITED.

- \* STEP 1 – Take your foot off the gas!
- \* Look ahead to see brake lights, signal lights, stop lights, and stop signs well in advance.

## 10. PLAN FOR LIGHT CHANGE AS YOU APPROACH “STALE GREEN LIGHTS”

- \* Yellow light means stop, unless doing so will bring you into intersection
- \* When approaching a STALE GREEN LIGHT...
  - Cover the brake pedal.
  - Pay attention to cars behind you.
  - Think about your “Point of no return”

## 11. CHECK LEFT, RIGHT, AND STRAIGHT AHEAD BEFORE MOVING AT GREEN LIGHTS.

- \* You only have the right of way when others give it to you!
  - People run red lights
  - Vehicles take time to clear intersections
  - Pedestrians Jay-Walk

## 12. DRIVE WITH LOW BEAM HEADLIGHTS ON DURING THE DAY

- \* A car with headlights off is visible from a distance of about 2200-2500 feet.
- \* A car with headlights on is visible at about 4700 feet.
- \* Make yourself as visible as possible so others will see you.
- \* Headlights are required by law anytime your windshield wipers are on!

**13. DO NOT ASSUME THE ROAD AHEAD IS CLEAR**

- \* You never know what will be around the next curve!
- \* PAY ATTENTION...even on the roads you drive all the time.

**14. SLOW DOWN - FOLLOW SPEED LIMITS**

- \* Driving slower is easier!
- \* When compared to a car traveling 25mph, a car traveling 50mph will...
  - Take 4x the distance to stop!
  - Require 4x the traction to negotiate a curve!
  - Strike an object with 4x the force!
- \* DMV Agents allow 3mph +/- the speed limit.

**15. LOOK WHERE YOU WANT TO GO!**

- \* Your eyes guide your hands... Your hands guide the car.
- \* You go where you look, so LOOK WHERE YOU WANT TO GO!

**16. STAY FOCUSED ON TASK**

- \* A car is just like a weapon. When used incorrectly it can hurt you and others.
  - If you were holding a loaded handgun, would you also be texting?
- \* Distraction is *the* leading cause of collision.
  - #1 DISTRACTION – Other people in the car.
  - #2 DISTRACTION – Cell phones.
- \* What is checking your phone or giving a ride to friends worth? Your live? Their life?