

SAFETY MATTERS



DEFENSIVE DRIVING- ACCIDENT PREVENTION

A GOOD DEFENSIVE DRIVER MUST BE ABLE TO ANTICIPATE THE OUTCOME OF TRAFFIC SITUATIONS AHEAD SO THAT HE OR SHE CAN ACT IN TIME TO PREVENT AN ACCIDENT.

The formula for defensive driving is to see the hazard, understand the defense and act in time. Understanding and effectively applying this formula prevents accidents in spite of the actions of other drivers or the presence of adverse driving conditions. A good defensive driver must be able to anticipate the outcome of traffic situations so that he or she can act in time to prevent an accident.

Let's take a closer look at the standard accident prevention formula and how it can be applied to everyday driving situations.

SEE THE HAZARD

Constantly scan the road ahead of you and check your mirrors. Think about what may happen as far in advance as possible. Never assume that a hazardous condition will have passed before you reach it. Consider the following scenarios:

- You see an approaching vehicle starting to pass another car. It looks like they will complete the pass in plenty of time, but you are not really sure. Think about your defense.
- You see a vehicle on the shoulder of the road—you can't see the driver anywhere outside the vehicle. What if the door of the vehicle is opened as you pass the vehicle? What would you do?
- You are traveling along a residential street. The vehicle approaching is a convertible with its top down. On the same side of the street you see a lawn sprinkler that is spraying water onto the roadway. What do you think the approaching vehicle will do and how would you react?

Of course there are countless more possibly dangerous scenarios, so look beyond the bumper of the vehicle in front of you and stay alert for any situation that could potentially develop into an accident.



UNDERSTAND THE DEFENSE

There are specific ways to handle most hazardous situations on the road. When you anticipate a hazard, you are able to review the situation in your mind and visualize your defense so that when the time comes, you are able to act quickly enough to prevent an accident. Preparation is key. If you have planned for various scenarios, you will feel comfortable when faced with them.

In an emergency situation, do not panic. Stay calm and continue to visualize the defensive action you will take to minimize damage.

ACT IN TIME

Once you see the hazard and decide upon a defense, act immediately. Never assume that the condition will clear up. The sooner you act the more time you will have to avoid an accident.

Defensive driving is not easy. You must constantly strive to improve your observation and coordination skills by scanning the road and concentrating on potentially hazardous situations. Seeing the hazard, knowing the defense and acting in time can mean saving lives: yours and those of the drivers around you.