

# **MAJOR PROGRAM POINTS**

## **"DRIVING SAFETY"**

**Part of the "SAFETY MEETING KIT SERIES"**

**Quality Safety and Health Products, for Today...and Tomorrow**

# **OUTLINE OF MAJOR PROGRAM POINTS**

The following outline summarizes the major points of information presented in the program. The outline can be used to review the program before conducting a classroom session, as well as in preparing to lead a class discussion about the program.

- Most of us travel the roads every day.
  - In cars, vans, or trucks.
  - We drive to and from work.
  - Duties may include sales calls, deliveries or servicing the needs of customers.
  
- Driving can seem routine, but the roads can be very hazardous.
  - Traffic accidents are the number one cause of death on the job.
  - More than 40,000 lives are lost each year.
  - Over two million injuries are caused every year by traffic accidents.
  
- Fortunately, most accidents can be prevented.
  - By having the proper attitude.
  - With good driving skills.
  - By having a well-maintained vehicle.
  
- Safe driving starts before you get behind the wheel, so inspect your vehicle before you hit the road.
  - Make sure that the tires are properly inflated.
  - Check your tire treads with a penny.
  - If you can see the top of Abe's head, then your tires should be replaced.
  - If you do a lot of "wet weather driving", where additional tread can make a major difference, use a quarter and George Washington's head.
  
- All vehicles should carry basic emergency equipment.
  - Spare tire, tire iron and jack.
  - Accident warning indicators.
  - Jumper cables.
  - A flashlight.

- You should adjust the vehicle to suit your body... for both comfort and safety.
  - Position the seat so your back is has good support and your feet can reach the pedals.
  - Adjust the mirrors to minimize "blind spots"... areas around the vehicle that you cannot see without turning your head.
  
- Always wear your seat belt!
  - It will double your chance of surviving an accident.
  - A crash at 30 mph without a seat belt is like falling off of a three-story building.
  
- Take the time to become familiar with a new vehicle.
  - Go for a spin around the parking lot.
  - Check for blind spots.
  - Test the steering... bigger cars and vans make wider turns.
  
- Try the brakes.
  - See how much room you'll need to stop at various speeds.
  - Vehicles with heavy loads will need more stopping distance.
  
- You need to be mentally prepared to operate a motor vehicle.
  - Fatigue and frustration are major causes of accidents.
  - Never start out on a trip if you aren't wide awake and alert.
  - If you get tired while driving, take a break and rest.
  
- More than half of all fatal accidents involve alcohol or drugs.
  - As little as one drink can slow reflexes and impair judgment.
  - Even legal drugs can impact your reaction time.
  - So don't drive "under the influence" of drugs or alcohol.
  
- Obey speed limits and traffic signs at all times.
  - They're posted for a reason.
  
- The faster you drive, the more dangerous the conditions.
  - Reduced "reaction time" and increased "stopping distances" are a dangerous combination.
  - A crash at 78 mph is twice as violent as one at 55 mph.

- Create a "safety cushion" around your vehicle when in traffic.
  - Leave enough open space to maneuver in an emergency.
- First look at your "following distance".
  - When a car ahead of you passes a landmark, count how many seconds it takes you to reach that same point.
  - If less than four seconds, slow down and back off.
  - If you're driving a larger or heavier vehicle you'll need more room to stop, so adjust your following distance accordingly.
- Watch for brake lights several cars ahead of you.
  - This early warning allows you to brake sooner.
  - Many fender benders can be avoided this way.
- You also need to have plenty of "side space".
  - Try and stay in the center of your lane.
  - Give passing traffic plenty of leeway.
- To be completely safe you have to pay attention to the traffic behind you as well.
  - Glance at your mirrors periodically to keep tabs on other vehicles.
- If someone is tailgating you, slowly reduce speed and let them pass.
  - Otherwise, you could be rear-ended if you need to make an emergency stop.

- Traffic signs and lines on the road indicate when it's legal to pass other vehicles.
  - It's not just the law, but a matter of safety.
  - If the lines are solid, you can't see far enough ahead to spot oncoming traffic.
  - So if the sign says "DO NOT PASS", then don't pass.
  
- Before you pass another vehicle "look before you leap."
  - Check both the road ahead and behind.
  - Signal your intention to pass before pulling out.
  
- Pass quickly and don't lag in the other driver's blind spot.
  - If you can't see the driver in their mirror, then they can't see you.
  - Don't "cut off" the other vehicle by jumping back into their lane too soon.
  - Wait until both headlights from the other vehicle appear in your rearview mirror, then signal and return to your original lane.
  
- Sharing the road with trucks and buses "ups the stakes".
  - Trucks are longer, wider and heavier.
  - Tractor trailers can weigh as much as 80,000 pounds (that's 40 times as much as subcompact car).
  
- Never follow a truck or bus too closely.
  - That will make it difficult to see around them, and you won't have enough warning if there's trouble ahead
  - Adjust your following distance so you have more time to react.
  
- Because trucks and buses are longer, you'll also need more open road to pass them.
  - And because they're wider, you need to make sure to stay far over in your lane when you do.
  - Watch out for "buffeting" (large vehicles can create strong wind currents that can push you off course).
  
- Trucks and buses also have bigger blind spots than cars.
  - You don't want to ride beside them any longer than necessary.
  - So when you pass them, you want to do it as quickly as possible.

- Never cut off a truck.
  - They need more stopping distance than a car.
  - At 50 mph, a loaded truck needs 300 feet, the length of a football field, to come to a complete stop.
- If you encounter a school bus, there are several things to remember.
  - On a two-lane road, if the bus is stopped with its red lights flashing you must stop as well.
  - This is required whether you are behind the bus, approaching it from the front, or on an intersecting road.
- On three or four-lane roads state laws vary.
  - Most states require that traffic in all directions still stop, unless there is a median or guardrail dividing the highway.
  - If there is a median, oncoming traffic can keep going.
- Once you are stopped, you must wait until the bus's flashing lights go off and any swing arms are retracted before you can start moving again.
- When you're driving behind a school bus, it's always smart to allow some additional stopping distance.
  - School buses make stops at locations you might not normally expect, such as railroad crossings and in front of students' houses.
- When you are stopped behind a school bus, allow a little extra room.
  - Just in case students or their parents will be crossing the road.
- Even though there are fewer vehicles on the road, more than half of all accidents occur at night.
  - At dusk, turn on your headlights to make it easier to be seen.
  - Use high beams as much as possible.
  - Only switch to low beams when you are behind other vehicles, facing oncoming traffic, or driving in snow or fog.
- Slow down so you don't over-drive your headlights.

- Even with your high beams on, you can only see so far in the dark.
- If you drive too fast, you won't have enough reaction time if you encounter a problem.
- Adverse weather conditions can dramatically affect how we should drive. Before you venture out into the elements:
  - Listen to the radio for road conditions.
  - Allow extra travel time.
  - Plan to use alternate roads.
- It's important to see and to be seen in bad weather.
  - Clear off the windshield, headlights, tail lights and turn signals for maximum visibility.
- The roads can be slippery in wet and snowy weather.
  - Reduce speed and increase following distances.
  - Apply brakes sooner, and press down slowly and gradually.
  - Slow down before turns and curves.
  - Avoid puddles and icy patches whenever possible.
- "Friction" between tires and the road surface is what normally keeps you on course.
  - Friction propels you forward and allows steering.
  - If you lose friction, you lose control.
- Skidding occurs when one or more wheels momentarily lose friction with the road.
  - When this happens, "momentum" takes over and the vehicle begins to spin.
- Don't slam on the brakes. This will destroy whatever friction... and control... you have left.
  - Instead, ease your foot off the gas pedal.
  - Steer in the direction of the skid.
  - If the back of the vehicle skids to the right, then steer towards the right.
  - If the car then skids to the left, steer to the left.
- "Hydroplaning" occurs when water lifts the tires completely off the road surface.
  - Ordinarily, tire treads channel water out of the way.

- The faster you go, the more water there is that needs to be channeled.
  - At high speeds, even small puddles can overpower the treads and cause hydroplaning.
- Don't brake, but ease off the gas pedal.
  - As you slow down, your wheels will "reconnect" with the road surface.
  - This will return control of your vehicle.
- No matter what the conditions, you need to be 100% focused on your driving.
  - Even in the best of circumstances there's a lot going on that you have to pay attention to.
- In recent years "distracted driving" has become a major issue for:
  - Law-makers.
  - Companies whose employees drive while on the job.
- There are three main types of distractions:
  - "Visual" ...taking your eyes off the road.
  - "Manual" ...taking your hands off the wheel.
  - And "cognitive" ...taking your mind off what you're doing.
- Now-a-days there are all too many things that can cause these types of distractions, such as:
  - Talking on a cell phone.
  - Texting.
  - Eating or drinking.
  - Talking to passengers (particularly children).
  - Using a navigation system or reading a map.
  - Changing the radio station, CD or your playlist.

- In fact, we routinely do so many of these things that more than 20% of the crashes that result in injuries involve distracted drivers.
  - This is an increase of more than 50% in the last four years.
- Cell phones have become such a serious problem that many states have banned the use of hand-held phones while driving.
  - Most states also ban texting.
  - Nationally, the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration prohibits commercial vehicle drivers from texting wherever they're driving.
- Many companies are also instituting their own bans on the use of cell phones while on company business.
- You can combat distracted driving yourself in a number of ways.
  - Set your car radio, or preload your CD's or playlists before you start your journey.
  - Make sure that children have everything they need before you leave.
  - Set up your navigation system or mark out your trip on a map ahead of time.
  - Be sure everyone is buckled up.
- You should also turn off your cell phone while you're on the road.
  - If you're expecting an important call, leave the phone on but don't answer it when it rings (pull over at the next safe location and check your voice-mail).
  - Get off the road to make calls, text or to grab a bite to eat.
- Most of all take your time and be patient.
  - Nothing is so important that you should risk your and others' lives to "do it now".
- In addition to being distracted, people always seem to be in a hurry when they're in their car.
  - Another phenomenon that has become more prominent in recent years is "road rage".
- With the volume of traffic on most roads, getting somewhere quickly can be nearly impossible.

- This often leads to frustration...sometimes on our part, sometimes on the part of drivers with whom we share the road.
- Couple this with the aggressive driving styles that more and more people seem to have adopted, and too many situations turn into "road rage".
  - People yelling at one and other.
  - Using obscene gestures.
  - Wielding their vehicles like weapons.
- We need to know how to deal with "road rage" on two fronts.
  - Within ourselves.
  - On the part of other drivers.
- It starts with avoiding any aggressive driving of our own. Here are some helpful hints.
  - Plan ahead and allow enough time for delays should they occur.
  - Give your driving your full attention.
  - Don't take your frustrations out on other drivers.
  - Remember that driving isn't a "contest"
  - Realize that you can't control the actions of the drivers around you...you can only control the way you react to them.
- If you are the victim of "road rage", there are some other things that you should remember.
  - The other driver could have made an honest mistake (so give them the benefit of the doubt).
  - Don't retaliate (it's not worth risking your life for).
  - Always be polite and courteous, even when other drivers aren't.
- Most importantly, never make eye contact with an angry driver.
  - Often a challenging look from you is all they need to increase their rage.

- If another driver is harassing you, try to get away from them as quickly as possible.
  - Leave the road you're on and take an alternate route.
- If they follow you, drive to the nearest police station.
  - Let the officer on duty know what is going on.
  - File a report.
- Adverse road conditions, distractions and road rage aren't the only causes of driving emergencies.
- A "blow out" is a rapid loss of air from a tire.
  - A vehicle will pull to the side of the flat tire due to increased friction.
- Don't hit the brakes.
  - Accelerate instead (this will give you more power and more control).
- Then do four things:
  - Keep a firm grip on the wheel.
  - Compensate for the "pull" by steering the other way.
  - Slow down and turn on the hazard flashers.
  - Stop at a safe, level area and fix the tire.
- Traffic accidents can happen to even the safest drivers. If you're involved in one:
  - Stay calm and keep your head.
  - Don't move the vehicles unless someone is in immediate danger.
  - Turn off your engine and turn on your hazard flashers.
- Check to see if everyone is okay.
  - Don't move anyone who is injured.
- Never leave the scene of an accident.
  - Call the police or have a passer-by notify authorities.

- Be ready with your driver's license, vehicle registration, and proof of insurance.
  - They should always be with you when you drive (it's the law in virtually every state).
  - You'll need to exchange this information with the other driver and show it to the police.
- Get the name, address and telephone number of anyone who witnessed the accident.
  - Make a note of the responding police officer's name, badge number and department.
  - Be sure to get a copy of the police report
- If the accident happened while you were working, or in a company vehicle, report it to your supervisor immediately.

**\* \* \* SUMMARY \* \* \***

- Driving can be dangerous, but most accidents can be prevented. To review:
- Familiarize yourself with your vehicle before you drive.
- Keep your eyes and mind on the road.
- Always maintain a "safety cushion" around your vehicle.
- Pass with care.
- Use your headlights from dusk to dawn, including the high beams.
- Proceed with caution in inclement weather.
- Stay calm. Don't take out your frustrations on other drivers.
- Know what to do in case of an accident or other emergency.
- Like every other part of your life, driving comes with responsibility. So know what you need to do to drive safely.