OUTLINE OF MAJOR PROGRAM POINTS
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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.

- **We do so much driving that it’s easy to forget how dangerous it can be.**
  - Road accidents claim almost 35,000 lives, and cause more than two million serious injuries, every year.
  - Fortunately, most accidents can be prevented.

- **You can avoid trouble on the road if you approach your driving with:**
  - The right skills.
  - A well-maintained vehicle.
  - The right attitude.

- **And you can start being a safer driver even before you put the key in the ignition.**

- **Are you ready to drive safely? Before you answer that, ask yourself if your vehicle is ready.**
  - Keeping your car in good mechanical condition is key to preventing trouble on the road.
  - Annual state inspections will help you with this.
  - So will following the service schedule recommended by your vehicle’s manufacturer.

- **Your vehicle has some critical parts that you should pay attention to regularly.**

- **Tires keep your vehicle secure on the road.**
  - Check their condition.
  - Keep them at proper pressure, and replace them as needed.
  - Put a tire pressure gauge in your glove box if you haven’t already got one.
- **Windshield wipers** keep your windshield clean and help you to see in bad weather.
  - Make sure the blades are in good shape and clear your windshield effectively.
  - Remember to keep the washer fluid topped off, too.

- **Brakes** enable you to control your speed and stop your vehicle.
  - If you notice any unusual noise or vibration when braking, or have difficulty stopping, get your brakes checked immediately.
  - Have them repaired if necessary.

- **Don't forget about "emergency supplies". All vehicles should have basic equipment on board.**
  - Unless you have "run-flats", this starts with a properly inflated spare tire, a tire iron and jack.

- **Then put together a kit that includes:**
  - A snow brush and ice scraper.
  - Accident warning indicators, such as flares or a flashing light.
  - Jumper cables.
  - An emergency blanket or two.
  - A small shovel.
  - A flashlight.

- **The next question to ask yourself before setting out is, "Have I prepared for this trip?"**

- **Start by adjusting your vehicle for safety and comfort.**
  - Position your seat for good back support.
  - Be sure that your feet can easily reach the pedals, and operate them.
  - Adjust your rear and side view mirrors to minimize "blind spots".
• If you're driving a rental or company vehicle that you aren't used to, locate important controls and learn to use them. Also:
  – Familiarize yourself with the car's handling.
  – Try out the steering.
  – See how much "stopping distance" you need at various speeds.
  – Remember, larger vehicles and those with heavy loads require more stopping distance.

• Finally, stop in at the gas station and "fill'er up".
  – Check the oil while you're at it.
  – Tire pressure, too.

• Now are you ready to drive safely?
  – You can't answer "yes" if you're under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
  – Even one drink can slow your reflexes and impair your judgment.
  – Drugs do the same.
  – More than half of all fatal accidents involve drugs or alcohol.

• You also can't say you're ready to drive safely if you're not wearing your seat belt.
  – Being in an accident at 30 mph without a seat belt is like hitting the ground after falling off a three-story building.
  – Wearing a seat belt doubles your chances of surviving any crash.
  – Ask your passengers to wear theirs, too.

• Now that you're ready, and your car is ready, we can begin practical instruction in the basics of driving safety.

• Road signs help you avoid problems by warning you of the conditions ahead.
  – You will know what to expect and can plan for it.
• Pay attention to the posted speed limits.
  – They take the road's specific conditions, visibility and traffic patterns into account.
  – Going any faster just isn't safe.

• The faster you go, the less time you have to react and the more space you need to stop.
  – That's a dangerous combination.

• When you're in traffic, create a "safety cushion" of space between yourself and the vehicles around you.
  – This will let you maneuver safely in an emergency.

• Begin by establishing the "following distance" between you and the car ahead.
  – Watch the car in front of you.
  – When it passes a landmark like a tree or telephone pole, count how many seconds it takes before you reach that same point.
  – If it's less than three seconds slow down and back off, you're too close!

• You can adjust your following distance to maintain safety anytime you run into a challenging condition.
  – In heavy traffic, add another second to the following distance.
  – If it's raining or snowing, add two more seconds.

• If another driver cuts in front of you, slow down to re-establish a safe distance between yourself and that vehicle.

• Stay in the center of your lane and allow plenty of "side space" in your safety cushion.
  – Check your mirrors regularly to keep track of traffic behind you as well.
When you want to pass another car, first make sure it's safe and legal to pass.
   - Look at the lines in the middle of the road.
   - Solid lines mean no passing... you can't see far enough.
   - If you see a sign that says "DO NOT PASS", don't pass! (the sign is there for a reason).

When you get to where you can pass, remember to "look before you leap."
   - Check the road ahead and behind to make sure there's enough room.
   - Before you pull out, use your turn signal to tell other drivers that you intend to pass.

When you pass, pass quickly. Don't linger in the other driver's blind spot.
   - If you can't see them in their side mirror, they can't see you either.
   - Don't "cut off" the vehicle you're passing by merging back into their lane too soon.
   - Wait until you can see both of their headlights in your rearview mirror... then signal and pull back in.

Sharing the road with cars is pretty straightforward, but we easily miss seeing things we're not looking for.

More than half of fatal motorcycle accidents involve vehicles driven by people who just "didn't see" the motorcycle.
   - Even when you know there are motorcycles in the vicinity, they're small enough to disappear into your blind spots or behind other cars.
   - A motorcycle's small size can also make it difficult to judge its distance and speed.
   - Stay on the safe side by assuming that it's closer and going faster than it appears to be.
• Minicars are bigger than motorcycles, but not by much, so they share many of the same problems in traffic.
  – You need to keep your eyes peeled for them, too, particularly in town and city traffic.
  – Be alert and drive carefully in their vicinity.

• At the other end of the scale are trucks, RVs and buses.
  – They are longer, wider and heavier than cars, and have bigger blind spots, too.
  – A tractor-trailer can weigh up to 80,000 pounds, and at 50 miles an hour it needs at least 300 feet to brake to a standstill.

• Allow extra following distance when you're behind large vehicles, because they're so hard to see around.
  – Following closely robs you of reaction time.
  – You won't know anything's happening until the truck's brake lights go on, and that could be too late.
  – You won't be able to see road signs in time to react to what they say, either.

• Following too closely makes it difficult for the truck driver to see you, as well.
  – You're in one of his blind spots, a place you really don't want to be.
  – If you can't see the side mirrors on a truck's cab, then you're invisible to its driver.
  – Stay back far enough that you both can see the "big picture".

• School buses deserve special attention.
  – They transport large numbers of children.
  – They constantly stop and start to pick kids up and drop them off.
  – The children often dart across the road to get to and from the bus.
• That's why special traffic laws apply when you're sharing the road with a school bus.
  – If you encounter a school bus on a two-lane road and the bus is stopped with its red lights flashing, you must stop too.
  – This applies whether you're behind the bus, approaching it from the other direction, or on an intersecting road.

• On three or four-lane roads, state laws vary.
  – Most states require that traffic in all directions still stop for school buses unless there is a median or guardrail dividing the highway.
  – In that case, oncoming traffic can keep moving, but traffic behind the bus must always stop.

• You must wait until the school bus turns off its flashing lights and retracts any "swing arms" before you start moving again.

• Driving is more dangerous at night.
  – Even though there are fewer cars on the road when it's dark, that's when more than half of all accidents happen.

• Slow down and use your headlights.
  – You should switch them on when the light begins to fade at dusk, or in gloomy weather.
  – They help you see what's ahead and make it easier for other drivers to see you, as well.
  – Don't "over-drive" your headlights by going too fast, you'll make it impossible to react quickly enough to what you can see.

• Your high beams can extend your reaction time a bit, so use them as much as possible.
  – You'll still want to maintain a moderate speed.
  – Remember that your high beams can blind the drivers of the cars in front of you.
  – Switch to low beams when the "spray" of your lights reaches that of oncoming cars, or when it reaches the bumper of a car you're following.
• Your high beams can blind you, too, if you turn them on in fog or snow.

• Bad weather poses a number of special challenges. If you are going to drive safely in bad weather, you have to be prepared.
  – Allow yourself extra travel time.
  – Get the weather forecast, as well as information on road conditions and any delays you may encounter.
  – Plan your trip accordingly, and think about alternate routes you can use "just in case".
  – Before you leave, clear any snow and ice off your vehicle's windows, lights and turn signals.

• Wet and snowy weather also makes the roads slippery.
  – Keep your speed down and increase your following distance.
  – Apply your brakes sooner when coming to a stop, and slow down before you get to turns and curves.
  – Depress the brake pedal slowly and gradually.

• Many drivers today simply aren't paying attention.
  – They're what we call "distracted drivers".
  – Distracted driving has been linked to as many as one in four accidents.
  – It kills and injures hundreds of thousands of people annually.

• Common distractions behind the wheel include:
  – Talking and texting on a cell phone.
  – Eating and drinking.
  – Putting on makeup.
  – Adjusting the sound system.
  – Talking to passengers (especially children).
• Fortunately, you can take steps ahead of time to avoid distraction.
  – Pre-record a message on your cellphone telling callers that you're on the road and will call them back later.
  – Turn your phone off and stow it out of reach.
  – Finish dressing, make-up and grooming before leaving the house.
  – Pre-program your GPS and review the navigation.
  – Pre-set your car radio and pre-load CDs or playlists.
  – Ensure that kids and other passengers are seated and buckled up, and that pets are secured as well.

• On the road, you can't allow yourself to do anything that forces you to take your eyes off the road, your hands off the wheel, or your mind off your driving.

• Instead, "When in doubt, pull over".
  – If you have to deal with a "kids issue", or you want to check your e-mail or make a call, pull over and stop.
  – On the highway you can do this on the shoulder or in the breakdown lane (remember to put on your emergency flashers) or at the next rest stop.
  – In town, just pull into a parking space.

• What should you do when you find yourself sharing the road with a distracted driver?
  – First, be careful.
  – Assume they don't see you.
  – Pull ahead or drop behind to give them a wide berth.
  – Above all, stay focused on your own driving.

• "Road rage" is another problem on the increase.
  – Each year there are thousands of reports of road rage, drivers yelling at one another, making obscene gestures, even using their vehicles like weapons.
• To prevent yourself from getting angry:
  – Remember that driving isn't a "contest".
  – Don't retaliate.
  – Give other drivers the benefit of the doubt.
  – Be polite and courteous… even when other drivers aren't.

• If an angry driver starts harassing you, "Rule One" is never make eye contact.
  – Angry drivers see this as a challenge, and it just increases their rage.
  – Instead, try to get away from them as quickly and safely as possible.
  – Leave the road you're on, if necessary.

• If an angry driver starts following you:
  – Take the threat seriously.
  – Stay on well-travelled roads.
  – Drive to the nearest police station, find a police officer, or call 911.

• Tires go flat, and accidents happen.
  – When something goes wrong while you're on the road, you need to stay calm so you can stabilize and resolve the situation.

• If you're involved in an accident, here's how to handle it.
  – First, turn off your engine, and turn on your flashers.
  – Don't try to move your car unless you're in immediate danger.

• Check any other vehicles involved.
  – If anyone is injured, do not move them (you may do more harm than good).
  – Instead, call for medical assistance.

• Never leave the scene of an accident.
  – Even if you only walk away, it's a "hit-and-run", and you can be arrested for it.
• Always contact the police, immediately.
  – Call 911, or if that’s not possible, have a passer-by
do it for you.

• Be ready with your driver’s license, registration and proof
  of insurance.
  – You’ll need to exchange this information with other
drivers and show it to the police as well.
  – Don’t forget to call your insurance company.

• If the accident happened while you were working or in a
  company vehicle, report it to your supervisor immediately.

*** SUMMARY ***

• Driving safely requires thinking ahead, being proactive,
  and doing things that can help to avoid dangerous
  situations on the road.

• Make sure your car is well-maintained.

• Always wear a seat belt and never drive "under the
  influence".

• Maintain a "safety cushion" around your vehicle, with at
  least a three-second "following distance".

• Watch out for smaller vehicles and use caution when
  sharing the road with trucks, RVs and buses.

• Reduce speed and be especially careful at night and in
  bad weather.

• Don’t let yourself get distracted or angry while you’re
  driving, and know how to cope with drivers who are.

• If you’re involved in an accident, remain calm and call the
  police.
  – Never leave the scene.
• The driver’s seat doesn’t have to be a dangerous place. Bring the proper attitude, preparation and knowledge behind the wheel with you, and you take a giant step toward arriving safely at your destination!