

DRIVING SAFETY

COURSE OUTLINE

- **As part of the "daily grind", driving may seem routine, but the roads can be very dangerous.**
 - Each year, accidents claim millions of lives worldwide as well as result in millions more serious injuries.
- **In fact, motor vehicle crashes are the number one cause of death on the job.**
 - This may make the driver's seat the most dangerous place you've ever been.
- **Fortunately, most accidents can be prevented if you approach driving with:**
 - The proper attitude.
 - Good driving skills.
 - A well maintained vehicle.
- **Safe driving starts before you even get behind the wheel.**
 - You should always inspect your vehicle before you hit the road.
- **Make sure you have enough air in your tires, and check the tread on them as well.**
- **There are several ways to check for tire wear.**
 - Many tires have built in "wear bars" between the treads... and when the tread is worn down to these bars, it's time for new tires.
- **You can insert a penny between the treads head first... and if you can see the top of Abe Lincoln's head, you need a new tire.**
 - If you do a lot of "wet-weather driving", where additional tread is needed to keep you safe, use a quarter and George Washington's head instead.
- **Make sure you have enough fuel.**
 - If you are driving an electric vehicle be sure it has a full charge.
 - You won't always have a gas or charging station where you'd like it to be.
- **Today many cars come with "run flat" tires, but if you have a "compact" or a full-size spare be sure it is properly inflated.**

- **All vehicles should have basic emergency equipment on board, including...**
 - A spare tire.
 - A tire iron.
 - A jack.
 - Accident warning lights or flares.
 - Jumper cables.
 - A flashlight.
- **You should adjust the vehicle to suit your body.**
 - This is not just for comfort, but for safety as well.
- **Position the seat so your back has good support, and your feet can easily reach the pedals.**
- **Adjust your rear and side view mirrors to minimize "blind spots".**
 - These are the areas around the vehicle that you can't see without turning your head.
- **Always wear your seat belt.**
 - A crash at 30 mph without a seat belt is like falling off a three story building.
 - Wearing a seat belt doubles your chances of surviving an accident.
- **If you're driving a vehicle that you aren't used to, take some time to become familiar with it.**
 - Go for a spin around a parking lot.
 - Try out the steering (bigger cars and vans need to make wider turns).
 - See where your blind spots are.
- **Test the brakes.**
 - Determine how much room you'll need to stop at various speeds.
 - Remember, larger vehicles with heavier loads will need more "stopping distance".
- **You also need to be mentally prepared to operate a motor vehicle.**
 - Fatigue and frustration are major causes of accidents.
 - If your day hasn't been going well, don't let your frustrations carry over to your driving.
 - Instead, pause a minute before you start off to take a deep breath and relax before you "hit the road".

- **Never begin a trip if you aren't wide awake and alert.**
 - If you get tired while driving, take a break to rest and regroup.
- **More than half of all fatal accidents involve drugs or alcohol.**
 - As little as one drink can slow your reflexes and impair your judgement.
 - Even legal drugs can impact your reaction time.
 - Don't "drive under the influence" of any substance.
- **There are a number of safe driving principles that apply no matter what type of vehicle you're in.**
 - Obey speed limits and traffic signs at all times.
 - They're posted for a reason.
- **When you're in traffic, create a "safety cushion" around your vehicle.**
 - This means leaving enough space to maneuver in an emergency.
- **The faster you go, the less time you have to react, and the more space you need to stop.**
- **To create a safe "following distance", begin by watching the car ahead of you.**
 - When it passes a landmark like a tree or telephone pole, count how many seconds it takes you to reach that same point.
 - If it's less than three seconds, you should slow down and back off... you're too close.
- **Remember, if you're driving a larger, heavier vehicle, you'll need more room to stop.**
 - Adjust your following distance accordingly.
- **Another good technique to employ is to watch for brake lights several cars ahead of you.**
 - This will give you an "early warning" and allow you to brake sooner.
 - Many "fender-benders" can be avoided this way.
- **You also need to leave plenty of "side space".**
 - Try to stay in the center of your lane and 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 regularly to keep tabs on other vehicles.

- **If someone is "tailgating" you, slowly reduce your speed and let them pass.**
 - You don't want to be rear-ended if you need to make a sudden stop.
- **Traffic signs and the lines on the road indicate when it's legal to pass other vehicles.**
 - It's not just the law, it's a matter of safety too.
 - If the lines are solid, you can't see far enough ahead to spot oncoming traffic.
 - If the sign says, "DO NOT PASS", then do not pass.
- **When you are going to pass, remember to "look before you leap".**
 - Check the road ahead and behind you to make sure there's enough space.
 - Signal your intention to pass before you begin to pull out.
- **Pass quickly. Don't lag in the other driver's blind spot.**
 - If you can't see the driver in their side mirror, they can't see you.
- **Don't "cut-off" the vehicle you are passing by jumping back into their lane too soon.**
 - Wait until you can see both headlights in your rearview mirror, then signal and change lanes.
- **Driving around other cars can be pretty straight forward, but sometimes there are "larger" problems that you need to be aware of.**
- **Sharing the road with trucks and buses "ups the stakes".**
 - They're longer, wider and heavier than you are.
 - Tractor trailers can weigh up to 80,000 pounds, which is 40 times as much as a subcompact car!
- **Never follow a truck or bus too closely.**
 - That makes it difficult to see around them.
 - You won't have enough warning if there's trouble ahead.
 - Adjusting your following distance will give you more time to react to their actions.
- **Because trucks and buses are longer, you'll need more open road to pass them.**
 - Because they're wider, you also 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.**
 - Don't travel beside them for any longer than necessary.
 - When you pass them, you should do it as quickly as possible.
- **If you are driving around a school bus, there are some additional things you need to remember.**
 - On a two-lane road, if the bus is stopped with its red lights flashing you must stop as well, no matter which direction you're going.
 - On three or four lane roads state laws vary, but most require that traffic in all directions still stop.
 - If there is a median or guardrail dividing the highway, oncoming traffic can keep going.
- **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.
- **You cannot start moving again until the bus' flashing lights go off and any swing arms are retracted.**
- **Even though there are fewer vehicles on the road, more than half of all accidents happen at night.**
 - When the sun starts to go down, turn on your headlights.
 - At dusk, headlights make it easier for other drivers to see you.
- **At night, use your high beams as much as possible.**
 - You can see farther with them on, which gives you more time to react to any trouble ahead.
 - Only switch to low beams when you're behind other vehicles, facing oncoming traffic, or driving in snow or fog.
- **You'll want to slow down at night as well, so that 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 time to react to any problems that the lights show you.

- **Adverse weather conditions can dramatically affect how we should drive.**
 - Before you venture out into the elements, go to your radio, TV or the Internet to determine road conditions.
 - You may need to allow yourself extra travel time and use roads that are more heavily travelled than your normal routes.
- **It's important to be able to see and be seen in bad weather.**
- **When preparing to drive in the snow you can maximize your visibility by clearing off your windows, headlights, tail lights, and all turn signal lights.**
 - You will also want to clean snow and ice off your roof, trunk and hood.
 - If it were to break loose on the road, it could "blind" you or the drivers behind you!
- **Roads can become slippery in wet and snowy weather.**
 - You should reduce your speed and increase your following distance when you're driving in bad weather conditions.
- **You should also apply your brakes sooner when approaching a stop.**
 - Press down slowly and gradually.
- **Slow down before turns and curves, not while you are making them.**
 - Avoid puddles and icy patches whenever possible.
- **The "friction" between your tires and the road's surface is what normally keeps you on course.**
 - It's what helps to propel you forward and allows you to steer.
 - If you lose this friction, you lose control of your vehicle.
- **"Skidding" occurs when one or more wheels momentarily lose friction with the road.**
 - In a skid, "momentum" takes over and the vehicle begins to spin.
- **When this happens, don't slam on the brakes.**
 - This will eliminate whatever friction, and control, you have left.
 - Instead, ease your foot off the gas pedal.
- **Compensate for the spinning motion by steering in the direction of the skid.**
 - If the back of the vehicle is skidding to the right, then steer to the right.
 - If the car then skids to the left, steer to the left.

- **"Hydroplaning" occurs when water lifts your tires completely off the road's surface.**
 - When you lose friction, you lose control.
- **Ordinarily, your tire treads channel water out of the way.**
 - The faster you go, the more water you need to disburse each second.
 - Even small puddles can overpower the treads and cause hydroplaning, so you should still drive more slowly when things are melting, and in heavy rain as well.
- **As with snow and ice, with hydroplaning you should not use the brakes.**
 - Instead, ease your foot off the gas pedal.
 - As you slow down, your wheels will "reconnect" with the road's surface, returning control of your vehicle.
- **No matter what the weather and road conditions are, 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, as well as for companies whose employees drive while on the job.**
- **Traffic safety experts tell us that there are three types of distractions...**
 - "Visual", when you take your eyes off the road.
 - "Manual", when you take your hands off the wheel.
 - "Cognitive", when you take your mind off your driving.
- **Now-a-days there are all too many things that can cause us to become distracted, 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 or your playlist.
- **In fact, we routinely do so many of these things that more than 420,000 people in the United States are injured each year as a result of accidents involving distracted drivers.**

- **Cell phones in particular have become such a big problem that almost all states have banned the use of hand-held phones while driving.**
 - Most states also ban texting.
 - The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration prohibits commercial vehicle drivers from texting when they're driving.
 - Many companies are instituting their own bans on the use of cell phones while on company business as well.
- **You can combat distracted driving yourself in a number of ways.**
 - Set your car radio or preload your playlists before you start your journey.
 - Make sure everyone is buckled up, and that children have everything they need before you leave.
 - Set up your navigation system ahead of time.
 - Turn off your cell phone.
 - Get off the road if you want to grab a bite to eat.
- **You should turn off your cell phone while you're on the road as well.**
 - 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.
 - If you need to make a call or send a text, pull over in a safe location.
- **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".
- **People always seem to be in a hurry when they're in their car.**
 - As a result, a phenomenon known as "road rage" has become more common in recent years.
- **The volume of traffic on most roads today makes getting somewhere quickly nearly impossible.**
 - This can be very frustrating to us and the other drivers with whom we share the road.
- **The aggressive driving styles that more and more people seem to have adopted can cause many situations to turn into "road rage", with people...**
 - Yelling at one another
 - Using obscene gestures.
 - Wielding their vehicles like weapons.

- **We all need to know how to deal with "road rage" on two fronts:**
 - Within ourselves.
 - On the part of other drivers.
- **To avoid any aggressive driving of your own, you can...**
 - 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 while you can't control the actions of the drivers around you, you can 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).
 - Always be polite and courteous (even when other drivers aren't).
- **Most importantly, never make eye contact with an angry driver.**
 - A challenging look from you will just escalate the situation.
- **If another driver is harassing you, try to get away from them as quickly as possible.**
 - Leave the road you are 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 and file a report.
- **Even under normal conditions there are a number of "driving emergencies" that can arise.**
- **One of the most serious of these occurs when a tire rapidly loses air pressure in a "blow-out".**
 - If a tire goes flat while you're driving, the vehicle will be pulled to that side by the tire's increased friction with the road.
- **After a blow-out, don't hit the brakes.**
 - The vehicle will just pull to the side more violently.

- **Accelerating can give you more control over your vehicle.**
 - Keep a firm grip on the wheel and compensate for the "pull" by steering in the other direction.
 - When you regain control, slow down and turn on your hazard flashers.
 - Then drive to a safe, level area to fix your flat.
- **Accidents can happen to even the safest drivers.**
 - If you're involved in one, stay calm and keep your head.
- **Don't move your vehicle unless it is creating an immediate danger.**
 - Turn off the engine, and turn on your flashers.
- **Check to see if everyone is okay.**
 - Don't move anyone who is injured unless their life is at risk.
 - You could do more harm than good.
- **Never leave the scene of an accident.**
 - Call the police or have a passer-by go for help.
- **Be ready with your driver's license, vehicle registration and proof of insurance.**
 - They should always be with you (it's the law in virtually every state).
 - You'll need to exchange this information with the other driver as well as 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 too.
 - 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 * * ***

- **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... but if you know how to drive in all conditions, you can arrive home safely at the end of every day.**