

Safety Bugle

Today's Topic: Driving Safety



Every 12 minutes someone dies in a motor vehicle crash, every 10 seconds an injury occurs and every 5 seconds a crash occurs. Many of these incidents occur during the workday or during the commute to and from work. Many of these deaths and injuries can be avoided by some basic practices.

Seat Belt Use Policy ("Click It or Ticket")

Seat belts are extremely effective in preventing injuries and loss of life. It is a simple fact that wearing your seat belt can reduce your risk of dying in a traffic crash by 45 percent in a car and by as much as 60 percent in a truck or SUV.

Distracted Driving

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), a division of the U.S. Transportation Department, distracted driving is "any activity that could divert a person's attention away from the primary task of driving."

Some of these types of distractions include:

- Texting - text messaging requires visual, manual, and cognitive attention from the driver, making it the most alarming distraction by far.
- Using a cell phone or smartphone.
- Eating and drinking.
- Talking to / disciplining passengers.
- Grooming.
- Reading, including maps.
- Using a navigation system.
- Watching a video.
- Adjusting a radio, CD player, or MP3 player.
- Adjusting temperature controls.

Distracted driving is a factor in 25 to 30 percent of all traffic crashes; The National Safety Council disputes these findings, and says that at least 28 percent of vehicle crashes are caused by *texting and cell phone use alone*.

With hectic schedules and roadway delays, many people feel pressured to multi-task just to keep up with their personal and work-related responsibilities. More time on the road means less time at home or at work but "drive time" can never mean "down time."

Drivers make more than 200 decisions during every mile traveled and safe driving is the primary responsibility.

Alcohol and Drug Impaired Driving

Alcohol use is involved in 40 percent of all fatal motor vehicle crashes, representing an average of one alcohol-related fatality every 30 minutes. It is estimated that three in every 10 Americans will be involved in an impaired driving-related crash some time in their life. Alcohol, certain prescription drugs, over-the-counter medications, and illegal drugs can all affect a person's ability to drive safely due to decreased alertness, concentration, coordination and reaction time.

Whenever your social plans involve alcohol, make plans so that you don't have to drive after drinking. For example:

- Prior to any drinking, designate a non-drinking driver when with a group.
- Don't let your friends drive impaired. Take their keys away.
- If you have been drinking, get a ride home or call a taxi.

- If you're hosting a party where alcohol will be served, remind your guests to plan ahead and designate their sober driver; offer alcohol-free beverages; and make sure all guests leave with a sober driver.

Fatigued Driving

Fatigued or drowsy driving may be involved in more than 100,000 crashes each year, resulting in 40,000 injuries and 1,550 deaths. Sadly, these numbers represent only the tip of the iceberg since these crashes are seriously under-reported.

Being fatigued significantly increases the risk of a crash. It makes us less aware of what is happening on the road and impairs our ability to respond quickly and safely if a dangerous situation arises. It is very difficult for drivers to accurately assess their own level of fatigue. The ability to self-assess becomes increasingly impaired as you get more fatigued, however the self-confidence in this ability remains. Nevertheless, there are some warning signs to look out for, including:

- Trouble focusing, or narrowing of attention
- Head nodding, or inability to keep the eyes open
- Not remembering the last few minutes
- Poor judgment, slower reaction time
- "Zoning out"
- Daydreaming and wandering thoughts
- Constant yawning or rubbing your eyes
- Drifting in the lane

Keep in mind that if you are experiencing any of these symptoms of driver fatigue, it is very likely that your driving performance is already impaired.

You should be well rested, alert and sober on the road so that they are in a position to defend themselves from drivers who do not make the same choice.

Aggressive Driving

Aggressive driving behaviors can include speeding, frequent and unnecessary lane changes, tailgating, and running red or yellow lights. These behaviors create unsafe situations and can lead to road rage.

Opinion surveys show motorists rate aggressive driving as a top threat to highway safety, yet many do not identify their own behavior as aggressive. Crash data shows a continuous increase in the number of deaths and injuries attributed to speed. And the more congested streets and highways are, the more your employees will encounter aggressive and unsafe drivers on and off the job.

Reduce Your Own Aggressive Driving Tendencies:

- Keep your emotions in check. Don't take your frustrations out on other drivers.
- Plan ahead and allow enough time for delays.
- Focus on your own driving. Yelling, pounding on the steering wheel and honking your horn won't make traffic move any faster.
- Don't tailgate or flash your lights at another driver.
- If you're in the left lane and someone wants to pass, move over and let the driver pass you.
- Use your horn sparingly.

The best offense to aggressive driving habits is solid defensive driving skills.