

AGGRESSIVE DRIVING

Most of the people driving on the roadways are just trying to get where they are going. Incidents and encounters with other drivers who may do something incredibly rude, thoughtless or careless can happen every day. Depending on traffic patterns, everyday driving can be extremely stressful. But as the stress of traffic congestion increases, people do things they wouldn't normally do. They are frustrated at the traffic, but generally, they are folks trying to get to work, to the market or home. These could be the people whipping through a 50 mph traffic zone at 80 mph, changing lanes like they were in a road race, exiting the freeway from the left lane, turning left from the right lane or tailgating.

Most of what the media calls "road rage" is simply aggressive driving. Road rage incidents are occurring more frequently and people are being attacked or injured because they honked their horn. It is important that you not become involved in road rage incidents, whether the cause is just incompetent or aggressive drivers or your own impatience. Many aggressive drivers have incredibly short fuses; take care to avoid being the one to light them.

If you are concentrating on driving safely, you will see the guy running the red light, approaching from the rear at high speed or weaving through traffic and then you can get out of his way ahead of time. Avoid changing lanes any more than necessary as this may anger other drivers by your weaving through traffic. If someone is weaving through traffic from behind, simply move over and let him or her go. When in heavy traffic, drive at the posted speed limit and let the aggressive drivers go on. Avoid blocking the left lane and a good law to remember is "Keep right Except to Pass".

In many states you may be sighted for aggressive driving if you have committed a series of acts during a single, continuous period of driving that presents an immediate hazard to another person or vehicle, exceed the posted speed limit and commit two (2) of the following violations:

- Failure to obey traffic signs or signals.
- Passing another vehicle on the right side.
- Unsafe lane change.
- Following too close.
- Failure to yield to emergency vehicles.

The penalties for aggressive driving may include fines, being required to attend traffic school and you license may be suspended.

Courtesy and consideration toward others are the most important driving attitudes you can develop. Concentration and alertness are other important elements. You must develop the habit of keeping your mind on driving.

Experienced drivers often face the problems of carelessness, overconfidence and bad driving habits that develop over time. Changes have taken place in cars and trucks and in driving rules and techniques. The amount of traffic is constantly increasing. Your ability to adjust and adapt to these changes will determine how safe a driver you really are. Skill is more than eye/hand/foot coordination. It is a well-rehearsed driving strategy, which involves anticipation, reaction and constant changing of the space between your vehicle and other vehicles.

"Defensive Driving" means being constantly aware of the driving conditions, planning ahead, anticipating dangers and taking the right action so as to not come in contact with any obstacle or other vehicle. You cannot drive well if you are angry, excited, worried or depressed. Anger is the emotion that probably occurs most often while driving, especially in heavy traffic. Allowing your emotions to influence the decisions you must make while driving will result in driving errors.

Radical driving maneuvers resulting from distractions or inattention may be perceived as aggressive driving. Avoid distractions such as:

- Searching for dropped items.
- Reaching into the glove compartment.
- Doing paperwork.
- Trying to get out of a jacket.
- Fastening a seat belt.
- Controlling children.
- Reading anything.
- Using a cell phone.
- Eating a meal.
- Putting on make-up.
- Adjusting the radio.

Suggestions that help you stay calm while driving in stressful conditions:

- Plan your journey; if you know the best way to get to your destination, it helps reduce anxiety and stress.
- Forget work or home worries while you are behind the wheel.
- Drive with your doors locked and if you have a sense of trouble, do not leave the safety of your car.
- In-car sound systems can help reduce stress, especially in traffic jams.





- Try to be courteous and stay calm if provoked by another motorist.
- Take a deep breath and count slowly from 1 to 10 if you are tempted to jump out of your car in a fit of rage.
- Do not retaliate by flashing headlights, sounding your horn or making a rude gesture; it only makes a volatile situation worse.
- Remember that we all share the roads and simply want to arrive safely.

Aggressive driving tactics such as passing on the shoulder, cutting in line, tailgating, changing lanes without signaling and cutting off drivers and weaving through heavy traffic will make you the target of road rage a lot quicker than if you drive in a friendly, courteous manner. Doing so will help you avoid accidents, tickets or other problems.