

Defensive Driving Techniques



Driving and operating vehicles for business activities is a significant responsibility, highlighting the need for employees to be cautious and defensive drivers.

Driving Statistics

According to U.S. federal government data:

- **Every 5 seconds** a motor vehicle accident occurs
- **Every 10 seconds** a motor vehicle injury occurs
- **Every 12 minutes** a motor vehicle fatality occurs

Vehicle accidents are a major cause of work-related fatalities in the U.S. When an accident happens, multiple risks can arise:

- Injury to the employee
- Injury to the public, potentially multiple injuries
- Property damage to your agency and the public

What is Defensive Driving?

Defensive driving is a technique focused on being aware of your surroundings, anticipating potential hazards, and responding calmly and deliberately to prevent accidents.

Importance of Defensive Driving

Defensive driving goes beyond safety; it involves managing stress on the road. By practicing defensive driving, employees are better equipped to stay safe and handle challenging situations effectively.

Safe Driving Habits

Defensive and safe driving techniques are habits that can be developed. Consider these tips to improve road safety.

- *Changing road or traffic conditions.* Adjust your driving to match the traffic around you, the weather, and road conditions.
- *Impaired driving.* Never drive with alcohol or drugs in your system and do not drive when you are sleepy or drowsy.
- *Distractions, such as food, maps, and cell phones.* Avoid distractions that take your attention away from driving or your hands off the wheel. Pull over and stop if you need to text or make a call.

Safe Driving Procedures

Adopt the safe driving procedures:

- Always wear your seatbelt.
- Ensure your vehicle is well-maintained and in safe operating condition.
- Adjust your speed according to weather conditions; reduce speed in snow or rain.
- Maintain at least a 3-second following distance from the vehicle ahead and allow more distance in adverse conditions or when driving larger vehicles.
- Regularly check your surroundings by glancing ahead, behind, and to the sides, and use your mirrors to monitor blind spots.
- Look left, right, and left again before entering an intersection.
- Ensure the path is clear even if you have the right of way.

Cell Phone Use

Employees who drive for work and utilize cell phones should avoid using them while driving. If answering a call is necessary and/or pulling over isn't safe, use hands-free devices, voice activation, and keep the call brief.