ESSENTIAL 29: Driver Safety



Key Takeaways:

– Recognizing examples of poor driving behaviors like distracted driving, speeding, driving under the influence, and driving tired (fatigued); how to avoid poor behaviors while driving; and the safety benefits of wearing seat belts and following company policies and procedures.
– Understanding how proper vehicle maintenance can prevent driving accidents, in addition to the benefits of keeping emergency preparation items in the car trunk.
– Learning safe driving practices in adverse weather conditions or at night, and how to stay safe on the roadway when presented with an emergency situation.
– Comprehending defensive driving practices, how to respond to distracted drivers, and how to respond appropriately to others using the roadway.

Course Description

Consider truck drivers – hauling freight is what they do. Great training and caution are fundamental to keeping your mobile workforce safe.

The caution you exercise while driving combined with your vehicle’s condition determines your safety on the road. A frequently overlooked safety precaution is proper vehicle maintenance. Bald or low pressure tires, poor wiper blades, and dirty lights will all interfere with your visibility and the vehicle’s maneuverability. You should replace your tires if the tread depth is less that 3/32nd of an inch, which can be determined by putting a penny upside down into your tire tread. If the top of Lincoln’s head is visible, you need to replace your tires. You vehicle can be disabled by worn, cracked, or loose hoses and belts, leaving you stranded. Loose dashboard items are very dangerous because during an accident, these objects become missiles.

External Condition Cautions:

- Predict potential slippery or other dangerous road conditions and adjust your driving to suit conditions.
- If you identify hazardous road conditions, slow down. Reducing speed allows you to identify and react to hazardous conditions sooner.
- Be extra cautious while driving at night and in fog, heavy rain, or snow.

- Turn on headlights after sunset or when visibility is 1000 feet or less (1000 feet = 330 yards or about 3 football fields). Drivers are also encouraged to use headlights in daylight hours. Other Driving Cautions
- Appropriately manage your speed with driving conditions.
- Pay attention to slower moving vehicles, especially trucks on hills.
- Do not forget, if you cannot see a truck's mirrors, the truck driver cannot see you.
- Watch for motorcycles.
- Scan for pedestrians and cyclists – they have the right of way.

Defensive Driving:

- Be extra cautious when your vehicle is in reverse.
- Look ahead at least 10 seconds, 1/4 mile, or to the next intersection or curve.
- Scan any traffic behind you frequently.
- When necessary, reduce your speed.
- Have caution when nearing intersections.
- Be aware of what other drivers do.
- Notify other drivers of what you plan to do.
- Prevent sudden changes in speed or direction.
- Lightly brake when trying to stop on a slippery surface and do not pump ABS brakes.
- Do not use cruise control on slippery or icy roads.
- Patiently adjust to the flow of traffic.
- Scan your blind spot before changing lanes.
- Be cognizant of other vehicles changing lanes.
- Have a safe following distance, which should range between 2 and 4 seconds depending on weather and other driving conditions.

When analyzing this safe distance, watch the vehicle ahead of you pass a specific mark. Proceed to count "one-thousand-one, one-thousand-two., etc." up to 4. In the case that your front bumper passes the same mark before you finish counting, you're following too closely. Allow plenty of space between your vehicle and the other vehicles around you, protecting you from others. Maintain that space cushion on all sides of you – ahead, to each side, and behind. When a vehicle is following you too closely, increase your following distance and increase your space cushion. As well, if you stop near or behind a truck or other large vehicle align your vehicle so the other driver can see you. Again, remember that if you cannot see their mirrors, they cannot see you.

In the case that your vehicle breaks down, drive your vehicle off the roadway as far as you can, when possible. Proceed to signal for help by turning on your vehicle's emergency flashers, tying a white handkerchief or scarf to the window or antenna, or by raising the vehicle's hood and if possible, set out flares or portable warning signals. Wait where you are; don't walk along the freeway. As well, be cautious when strangers offer help. If you cannot do so, ask them to call the authorities. Be wary of people who are not police officers, firefighters, or traffic control personnel that signal for you to stop. In the case that your car is bumped from behind in a secluded or dark area, or if you are followed and are not sure of the follower's intentions, go to the nearest well-lighted and busy public area, police department, or fire station and call for police assistance.

While this lesson familiarizes employees with the hazards of driving and methods to protect them from potential driving crashes, it is not intended to cover driving requirements. Such uncovered requirements may include commercial motor vehicles (CMVs) or the use of a commercial driver’s license (CDL), for examples. As well, this lesson does not address safety concerns associated with the use of off-road (ATV) vehicles, motorcycles, towing a trailer, or load securement while hauling equipment such as in the bed of a pickup truck.