Defensive Driving

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WHAT IS DEFENSIVE DRIVING?
Defensive driving protects us from what is happening around us. Developing defensive driving habits means:

- Creating a safe, stress-free personal driving space in and around your vehicle.
- Driving to your destination safely – without a ticket or a crash, and without affecting other drivers’ safety.
- Practice common sense, courtesy, and cooperation.
- Recognizing the risk of hazardous driving behaviors and conditions.

The FATAL FOUR are the driving behaviors that result in crashes and violations.

SPEED
Is the #1 unsafe driving behavior that contributes to collisions and violations.

RUNNING LIGHTS OR STOP SIGNS
This violation is related to more injuries than any other improper driving behavior.

CROSSING THE CENTER LINE
Vehicles cross the center line for many reasons, but this driver error has a potentially fatal outcome. Ask yourself when passing, “Is this absolutely necessary?”.

TAILGATING
Whether it is a bad habit or not realizing the danger, this violation usually ends in a collision or a crash.

DISTRACTED DRIVING
Our lives are busier than ever. So, doing other tasks while driving may seem like a good use of time, but these distractions take our attention away from driving. They also increase the risk of a crash.

THINGS YOU CAN DO BEFORE YOU START DRIVING
- Adjust your seat and head restraint
- Fasten your safety belt, and make sure passengers do too
- Properly adjust all mirrors
- Adjust radio
- Adjust windows, vents and AC/heater
- Look at maps

AGGRESSIVE DRIVING
- Tailgating
- Speeding
- Lane blocking
- Disregarding traffic signals
- Frequent and sudden lane changes
- Running lights or stop signs
- Improper passing
- Blocking traffic at an intersection
- Changing lanes or merging without using your blinker
- Using the horn for non-emergency situations
- Flashing high beam headlights at another vehicle
• Negative gestures towards others
• Brake checking drivers who are too close behind you

ROAD CONDITIONS
Every day you meet different driving conditions when you drive. Even while you are driving, the conditions change quickly. Recognizing these conditions and knowing how to adjust your driving to them are in your best interest. At least four driving conditions are beyond your control: **Light, Weather, Road and Traffic.**

SCHOOLS, BUSES AND CHILDREN
School buses mean children, and children don’t always use good judgment when getting on or off a bus. Here are the safest actions to take when approaching a school or a bus.

• Reduce your speed  
• Expect children to appear out of nowhere  
  Cover your brake  
• When traveling the same direction as a school bus, you must stop behind it if the red lights are flashing and/or the stop arm is extended.  
• When approaching a school bus that is stopped on the opposite side of the road, you must stop if the center divider is painted. You do not have to stop if the center divider is a raised curb, planter, fence or K-rail.

TRAINS
Next time you think you can beat a train to a crossing or intersection, think about this; A train hitting a car is like your foot smashing an aluminum can.

SEATBELTS
The chance that you will survive a vehicle crash is dependent on whether you are wearing a seatbelt or not. It is that simple!

DRINKING AND DRIVING
40 percent of all fatal crashes involve alcohol. Even if you don’t drink and never drink and drive, you share in the losses caused by other who do. Take responsibility for yourself – if you are drinking, do not drive. When dealing with alcohol, planning ahead is the best way to ensure the safety of everyone involved.

THE RESPONSIBLE DEFENSIVE DRIVER
Like it or not, you are the only person who can control your behavior. Do not give up control of your vehicle to other drivers or random emotions. There are driving conditions you cannot control (weather, light, road, traffic and other drivers), although you can control how you deal with those conditions.

The responsible defensive driver always; wears their seatbelt, drives cooperatively, scans the road ahead, manages time - stress and emotion, is patient with other drivers and models the driving behavior they seek in others.

QUESTIONS
If you have questions or concerns, please contact Kate Smiley, Safety & Health Manager at (916) 371-2422 or smileyk@agc-ca.org.