

BACK TO BASICS:
YOUR KEYS TO SAFE
DRIVING

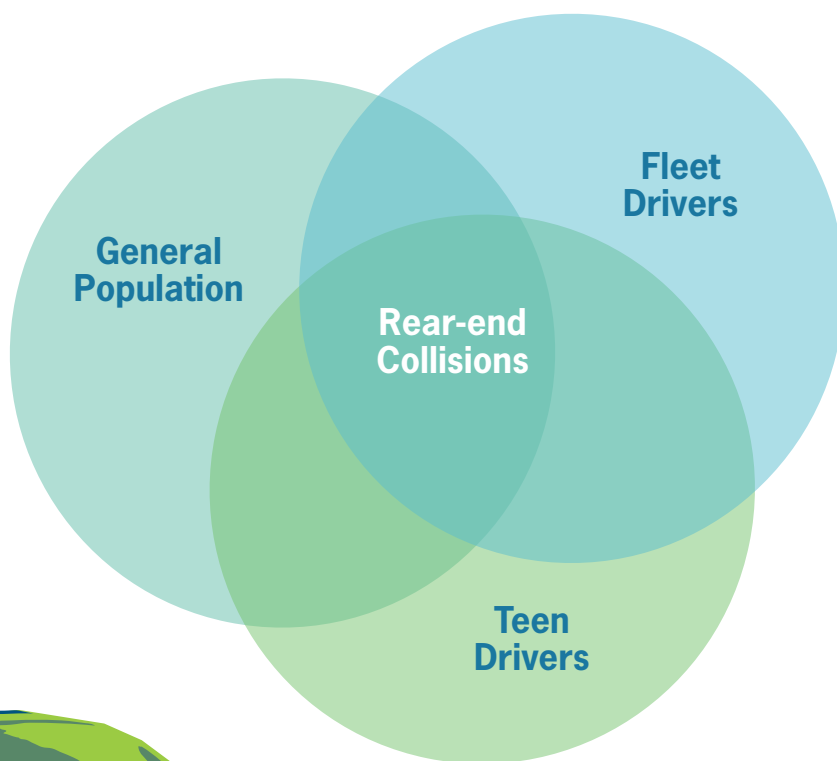


DRIVE SAFELY WORK WEEK: FRIDAY

FINE-TUNE THE FUNDAMENTALS

Being rear-ended and rear-ending another vehicle are two of the most frequent types of crashes for both fleet drivers and the general population. To avoid these common collisions, we need to focus on a few fundamentals. Some we learned in driver's education, but like many skills, they can get rusty without an occasional refresher. In fact, most company fleet safety programs emphasize basic skills and defensive driving tactics on a continual basis. While these skills can help you avoid a wide range of traffic dangers, they are particularly important for avoiding rear-end collisions.

A recent analysis of the 2010 database of all police-reported 2-vehicle crashes shows nearly 40% are classified as rear-end collisions.¹



A FEW FACTS

- At 60 mph (96km/h), a typical car needs between 120–140 ft (36–42 m) to reach a full stop. Most SUVs require an extra 5 to 10 ft (1.5 to 3 m) on top of that.²
- A recent study found that drivers fail to signal 48% of the time when changing lanes and 25% of the time when making a turn. That study estimated that turn signal neglect is a factor in as many as 2 million crashes per year.³
- The FHWA estimates that if drivers had just ½ second more warning, 60% of rear-end collisions would be prevented.⁴

¹ IIHS analysis of NASS-GES 2010 data from US DOT, May 2012

² cars.com and driversed.com

³ Society of Automotive Engineers, April 2012, publication number 2012-01-0261

⁴ Report No. FHWA-RD-95-043





GOT TEENS?

- In a recent study of teen driver crashes, lack of scanning to detect potential hazards, going too fast for road conditions (i.e., driving too fast to respond to others or navigate a curve successfully) and distractions both inside and outside of the vehicle were the three most common contributors in 75% of teen crashes.²
- In a study by the National Institutes of Health, teen drivers left nearly two-tenths of a second less following distance behind the car ahead than did general traffic.³ That may not sound like much, but at just 40 mph (64 km/h), that reduces stopping distance by 10 ft (3 m).
- Whether you have tweens or teens, you can start now to help them develop the skill of scanning the road to identify hazards. It's as easy as pointing out the car ahead that is swerving in its lane or the SUV that appears like it is not going to slow down for an upcoming intersection.
- Even after your child has obtained their license, take the opportunity to ride with them every chance you get to provide guidance and advice and be sure good habits haven't slipped as their confidence has increased.
- To help with this, NETS' has developed *The Novice Driver's Road Map: An Eight-Step Guide for Parents* (NDRM) to provide a structured approach to coaching teens in a variety of driving environments. To order, visit the NETS website at www.trafficsafety.org.

FINE-TUNE THE FUNDAMENTALS

Following distance is key. Always leave at least 3–4 seconds of distance between your vehicle and the one in front. If the roads are wet or slippery, you should double your following distance. To determine your following distance, select an object on the road ahead such as a sign, tree or overpass. When the vehicle ahead of you passes the object, slowly count “one- one thousand, two- one thousand, three- one thousand...” If you reach the object before completing the count, you're following too closely.

Scan ahead. Look down the road ahead of you for a distance of 8–10 seconds. In the city, that's about one block and on the highway, it's about 1/3 of a mile, 4 city blocks, or 1/2 of a kilometer.

Keep your eyes moving. The drivers' seat is a 360-degree environment, with potential hazards in front, behind, and on all sides. Many fleet safety programs recommend a “full mirror sweep” every 5–6 seconds. If a vehicle suddenly appears in one of your mirrors without you noticing its approach, you'll know you are not shifting your eyes frequently enough.

Watch your speed. The faster you are driving, the less time you have to react to sudden moves by other drivers and the less time other drivers have to react to you. Always observe the speed limit and slow down to accommodate traffic and road conditions.

Be predictable. Avoid quick acceleration or sudden turns. Controlled, gradual maneuvers give other drivers more time to adjust.

Give your brakes a brake. If you're scanning ahead properly, you should only need to use 30% of full braking power for non-emergency braking situations. If you find yourself braking hard, you need to increase your following distance.

Look for mixed signals. Just as “body language” may contradict what a person is saying, when the “body” is that of a vehicle, it can also provide valuable information about a driver's true intentions. For example, a vehicle may have its left turn signal on but its wheels are turned to the right.

Send the right signal. Experts recommend that you activate your turn signal for 3–4 seconds before changing lanes or making a turn.

When not to leave a problem behind you. If someone is tailgating you or a check in the rearview mirror tells you they may be distracted by tasks unrelated to driving, move over when it's safe to do so and let them pass.

Have an escape plan. Avoid driving directly next to another vehicle for any length of time. Traveling too long beside another vehicle reduces the number of opportunities to move to one side to avoid a collision. Also, when coming to a stop or when stopped, leave enough room between you and the vehicle in front of you to pull out of your lane in the event the driver of the car behind you shows no signs of slowing down.

Give motorcyclists extra space. Motorcycles can stop much more quickly than cars or trucks. If you're following a motorcyclist, increase your following distance to give you more time to react in case of a sudden stop.

¹ Society of Automotive Engineers, April 2012, publication number 2012-01-0261

² Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, State Farm, 2011 <http://www.teendriversource.org/>

³ National Institutes of Health, 2005 <http://www.nih.gov/news/pr/aug2005/nichd-24a.htm>