

SAFE DRIVING: AVOIDING COLLISIONS



This talk discusses the missteps that can lead to vehicle collisions and the steps employees should take to avoid such collisions.

Materials to have on hand:

- Recent news story about vehicle collisions
- Company driving policy, if applicable

Items for attendees to consider during the talk:

- What are some common causes of vehicle collisions?
- What can you do as a driver to prevent collisions?

TALK

We're all so used to driving that we forget that it's a dangerous and risky activity. According to the National Safety Council, motor vehicle-related deaths occur more often in collisions between motor vehicles than any other type of incident. This type of crash represents about three-quarters of injury crashes, while single-vehicle collisions with fixed objects or pedestrians result in fewer yet significant injuries, including death. Even when collisions do not result in death or injury, damage to vehicles can be extensive and costly. So let's review some causes

of vehicle collisions and the steps that all of us can take to avoid and/or reduce vehicle collisions.

Before you get on the road

The condition of your vehicle is a contributing factor to preventing collisions. Before you get on the road, note whether your vehicle has been properly maintained and whether your equipment is defective or properly working. Bad tires; faulty brakes; and, if applicable, an improperly functioning collision avoidance warning system are important elements that could contribute to a collision. If you're driving a truck with cargo, remember that an improperly loaded or secured cargo can shift and affect the truck's stability or handling.

Impatience

Impatience is often considered the most common driving error and the one that leads to many other errors. If you are impatient, you are prone to take risks you shouldn't, such as speeding, tailgating, and impulsively changing lanes. Impatience is often the result of a lack of preparation. For example, you can make dangerous driving choices if you haven't left enough time to reach your destination, if you haven't planned your route, or if you haven't checked the weather or local traffic information.

Continued on page 2

Talk Date: _____

Location: _____

Supervisor/ _____

Presenter: _____

Attendees: _____

Comments: _____

SAFE DRIVING

Distraction

It's easy to be distracted and lose your focus when you're on the road, especially if you have a long and perhaps boring drive ahead. Distractions include the most obvious one, which is using your cellphone for calls, browsing, or texting. Other distractions include eating and drinking, adjusting the radio or navigation system, not looking at the road, and zoning out. There's evidence that shows that drivers whose attention is diverted away from driving for more than 2 seconds at a time are at an increased risk of a crash.

Impairment

The most common impairment to safe driving is alcohol or other drugs, but there are nonchemical conditions that can also impair your driving. Fatigue, stress, and illness can affect your reaction time and ability to make correct driving decisions. For example, some studies have shown that fatigue can be just as dangerous as alcohol impairment. So be sure you're well-rested and healthy before you drive.

Speed

Driving too fast is one of the main causes of collisions. Speed decreases both your reaction time and your ability to control your vehicle. The National Safety Council has stated that for every 10 miles per hour, or mph, over 50 mph, you double the risk of injury and death, as speed contributes to the severity of the collision impact. Overall, the most important action you can take to avoid a collision is to slow down and increase the distance between you and other vehicles.

Driving safely requires thinking ahead and giving it your undivided attention. Follow these safe driving practices, and you'll be able to reduce your risk of collisions and help keep yourself and others safe on the road.

SAFE DRIVING

CELL PHONE SAFETY WHILE DRIVING



This talk gives an overview of the dangers of distracted driving and some tips for safe cell phone use.

Materials to have on hand:

- Recent story about a distracted driving-related traffic accident
- Company cell phone/distracted driving policy
- Applicable state laws related to distracted driving

Points to consider:

- Why is using a cell phone while driving dangerous?
- Do voice-activated features and hands-free devices make cell phone use safer while driving?
- What are some ways you can stay in touch on the road while staying safe?

TALK

Cell phones make communication easier and help you stay connected from any location. But using a cell phone while driving endangers not only you (the driver) but also your passengers, other motorists, and pedestrians.

In a recent year, more than 3,300 people were killed in distracted driving-related traffic incidents, and over 400,000 people were injured in motor vehicle crashes involving a distracted driver. *[Discuss recent/ local example or incident.]*

Texting while driving is one of the most dangerous behaviors because it involves three types of distraction at the same time as you look away from the road, use your hands to type a message, and think about what you are reading or writing.

In fact, sending or reading a text message while driving at 55 miles per hour is like traveling the length of a football field blindfolded! Other common smartphone activities, such as reading e-mail, browsing the Web, and manipulating navigation applications, are equally hazardous and should not be done while driving.

Many mobile devices now include voice-activated features and other hands-free options. These may seem safe, but they are not. When you talk on a cell phone while driving, regardless of whether the phone is handheld or hands-free, you experience slower reaction times because your mind is on your phone conversation, not on your surroundings—and when it comes to detecting and avoiding hazards on the road, every second counts.

The safest way to use your cell phone while driving is simple—*don't do it*. Many cell phones allow you to program an automatic message that informs anyone who tries to contact you while you're behind the wheel that you're driving and will get back to him or her as soon as possible.

If you're on the road frequently for work, one way to stay in touch while staying safe is to assign a distinct ringtone to important business contacts. If you hear

Continued on page 2

Talk Date: _____

Attendees: _____

Location: _____

Supervisor/ _____

Comments: _____

Presenter: _____

SAFE DRIVING

that ringtone while driving, pull over to a safe area to return the call.

[Mention applicable company policies regarding distracted driving.]

Using a cell phone while driving is also illegal in many places. In 44 states, text messaging is banned for all drivers, and in 12 states, all drivers are prohibited from using handheld cell phones while driving. *[Mention specific applicable state laws here.]*

Finally, using a cell phone while driving is dangerous, but having a cell phone in your vehicle is an important safety measure. If you experience vehicle trouble, witness an accident, or encounter another emergency situation, you can use a cell phone to call for help—but make sure you do so safely.

Remember, your cell phone is a valuable tool, but it's important to make sure you don't create hazards for yourself and others by using it behind the wheel.

SAFE DRIVING

PREVENT REAR-END COLLISIONS



This talk discusses the primary causes of rear-end vehicle collisions and details the safe driving practices that can prevent these incidents.

Materials to have on hand:

- Examples of recent rear-end collisions

Items for attendees to consider during the talk:

- What are some common causes of rear-end collisions?
- What can you do to prevent rear-end collisions?

TALK

Rear-end collisions are a very common type of vehicle accident. Every year, these accidents kill tens of thousands of people and injure hundreds of thousands more. And even when these collisions do not cause death or injury, they can cause extensive and costly damage to vehicles. If you drive on the job, or even if you just commute by car, knowing the causes and ways to prevent rear-end collisions can help to keep you safe.

Rear-end collisions usually happen for the following reasons:

- **Distracted driving.** Drivers who text, talk on cell phones, or engage in other behavior that takes their hands away from the wheel, their eyes off the road, and their mind off their driving are more

likely to cause a rear-end collision because they cannot react quickly enough to changing traffic patterns or road conditions in front of them. The solution is simple: Don't try to multitask when you're driving. If you need to make a phone call, send a text message, or check your e-mail, pull over to a safe place to do so.

- **Tailgating.** It should go without saying that following another car too closely will increase the likelihood of hitting that car from behind in the event of a sudden stop. Avoid tailgating by always leaving at least 3 seconds' following distance between your vehicle and the vehicle in front of you.
- **Road and weather hazards.** If a road is icy, wet, snowy, or slippery, it can be more difficult to bring your vehicle to a stop. In addition, foggy conditions or poor visibility during a storm can prevent you from seeing a car in front of you until it's too late. To prevent rear-end collisions in bad weather, slow down and increase your following distance.
- **Speeding.** When you drive too fast, you are more likely to lose control of your vehicle, putting you at risk of causing a rear-end collision. Always follow posted speed limits and adjust your speed to the traffic, road, and weather conditions so that you are always in control.
- **Heavy traffic.** In traffic jams, like those that occur during rush hour or in a construction zone, the stop-and-go flow of traffic frequently causes

Continued on page 2

Talk Date: _____

Location: _____

Supervisor/ _____

Presenter: _____

Attendees: _____

Comments: _____

SAFE DRIVING

rear-end collisions. To prevent these accidents, pay close attention when driving in heavy traffic. Try to keep your frustrations under control, and be courteous in letting other drivers merge and change lanes as necessary.

- **Driving under the influence.** Alcohol and other drugs impair your judgment and vision, including your ability to judge depth perception and react to a vehicle in front of you. Never drive when you are under the influence of any substance that interferes with your ability to do so safely. Remember, even some prescription and over-the-counter

drugs can make driving dangerous. Check with your doctor if you are unsure.

- **Fatigue.** Driving while drowsy interferes with your concentration and puts you at risk of falling asleep behind the wheel, both of which can lead to a rear-end collision. Make sure you get adequate rest before driving. If you become drowsy, pull over and take a short break.

By following these basic safe driving practices, you'll reduce your risk of causing a rear-end collision and keep yourself, your passengers, and other drivers safe.