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- Don't be a statistic
- Minimize your risks
- Responsible driving habits
- Beat the odds – avoid these behaviors

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## Don't become a statistic – tips for safer driving



**A crash occurs every five seconds, and every ten seconds someone suffers from a traffic-related injury. In the United States, motor vehicle collisions are a leading cause of death and injury and have far-reaching effects on employees, co-workers, families, and employers. Whether you manage a fleet of vehicles, are part of a mobile sales force or simply drive to work, you can have an impact on roadway safety.**

### Promote safe driving practices at work and at home

Safe driving requires a clear head and sharp focus. On average, a driver makes over 200 decisions per mile, so it's critical to be alert before getting behind the wheel. Make it a rule never to drive when you're tired or impaired by alcohol, medications or drugs.

- **Get plenty of rest before getting behind the wheel.** Being tired changes the way you evaluate information and respond.
- **Take a break** if you find yourself lost in thought or have difficulty focusing on the road ahead.
- **Driving at night requires a high degree of concentration.** It is not a time to relax, in spite of the fact that there tends to be less road congestion. Reduce your stress by allowing plenty of time to reach your destination.

### The causes of motor vehicle collisions

- Drowsiness increases a driver's risk of an accident by at least a factor of four.
- Eighty percent of crashes and 65 percent of near crashes involve some form of driver inattention within three seconds before the event. The most common distraction is the use of a cell phone.
- "Road rudeness," or tailgating, abrupt lane changes, excessive speed, and passing on the shoulder are a factor in three out of four highway collisions.

\*Source: National Highway Safety Administration, 2003. Publication DOT HS 809 682.

### Minimize your risks

It's an all too common situation these days. Traffic is backed up and the culprit is a stalled car with its hood up. Disabled vehicles not only cause people to be late for work but add to their stress and contribute to aggressive and distracted driving.

Mechanical defects and worn equipment are a factor in 13 percent of crashes. Investigators point out that a well-maintained vehicle can make the difference between a crash and a near miss.

- **Keep the gas tank at least half full.** This helps control condensation inside the tank, keeping your fuel free of water.
- **Keep your tires properly inflated** and inspect the tread for uneven wear, indicating the need for wheel alignment. Also look for bulges and bald tires. Tires lose about one pound of pressure for every 10-degree drop in temperature.
- **Windshield wiper blades** generally need replacing every 6 months. Keep the reservoir filled with wiper fluid.
- **Be sure all your lights are working** including headlights, brake lights, turn signals and emergency flashers.
- **Check the oil every other fill-up** at the gas pump. Change oil as recommended in your owner's manual. Replace the filter each time.
- **A dead battery is one of the most common reasons for a breakdown.** Carry an auxiliary power source to boost a dead battery.
- **Learn the early warning signs of brake trouble**, such as a squealing or scraping sound, a soft brake pedal or pulling to one side.
- **Routinely check the power steering**, brake and transmission fluid, engine oil, antifreeze coolant and windshield wiper fluid.
- **Routinely check hoses and belts.**
- **Watch your monitors.** Warning indicator lights monitor critical functions of your vehicle and help drivers to avoid damage, so consult your owner's manual if a light appears.

Sources: NETS Traffic Safety Primer:  
A Guidebook for Employers.

# Safe driving is your responsibility

Driving requires your undivided attention. Avoid road trouble by following these simple steps:

- **Plan your route and maintain your vehicle** – a well-maintained vehicle can help prevent accidents and breakdowns. Do a little pre-trip planning, noting weather and road conditions to help head off traffic nightmares.
- **Focus your attention and minimize distraction** – multitasking may be a great way to save time, but it's not so great in the car while you're driving. Don't let anything inside or outside your vehicle become a distraction.
- **Know your surroundings and share your space** – aggressive drivers, distracted and impaired drivers, work zones and highway workers, trucks, school buses, emergency response vehicles and motorcyclists

are all part of the terrain. Be aware of your surroundings so you can anticipate the decisions of other drivers.

- **Watch your speed and keep your distance** – adding another second between you and the car in front of you can help you avoid an accident, especially at higher speeds where you have less time to identify and react to a hazard.

- **Signal your intentions** – using your turn signal helps other drivers know when you are attempting to turn or change lanes.
- **Use your seat belt** – make seat belt use a life-governing rule, every trip every time. It's the single most effective way to prevent serious injury in the event of a crash.

Sources: NETS, Safe Driving Is Your Responsibility. Make the Commitment Campaign, 2006.



## Beat the odds – avoid these behaviors

Motor vehicle collisions are the leading cause of death for every age from three to thirty-three years of age. There are four behaviors that impact this statistic.

- **Thirty-six percent of passenger car occupants and 38 percent of light truck occupants involved in fatal collisions were unrestrained.** Seat belts are the most effective means of reducing deaths and serious injuries in traffic crashes. They save nearly 12,000 lives and prevent 325,000 serious injuries in America each year. During a crash, anyone not wearing a seat belt will slam into the steering wheel, windshield, the vehicle's interior, or be ejected from the vehicle.

- **Alcohol-impaired driving was involved in 40 percent of fatal collisions, representing an average of one alcohol-related fatality every 30 minutes.** Alcohol, certain prescription drugs, over-the-counter medications, and illegal drugs can result in decreased alertness, concentration, coordination and reaction time. Alcohol is a contributing factor in 39 percent of work-related traffic crashes.



- **A substantial number of the 6.8 million collisions that occur each year are estimated to be caused by aggressive driving.** Motorists often find themselves caught up in bottlenecks and traffic delays. These situations create a high level of frustration and can spark aggressive driving behaviors that include excessive speed, tailgating, failure to signal a lane change, and running a red light.
- **Driver distraction is a factor in 25 to 30 percent of all collisions.** Events inside and outside the vehicle can distract a driver. Distracted drivers fail to recognize potential hazards in the road and react more slowly to adverse weather and traffic conditions. Distractions include adjusting climate controls, radio or CD players; eating; using a cell phone; tending to children; reading a map or publication; grooming or applying makeup; and preparing for work.

Source: Guidelines for Employers to Reduce Motor Vehicle Crashes, produced by OSHA, NHTSA, NETS, 2006.

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