

City Safe

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Number 3

**A Guide To Assist In
Training Employees About:**

Driving Safety



www.kmit.net

provided by:

Kansas Municipal Insurance Trust

Driving Safety

Meeting Objective:

To highlight the safety precautions necessary to insure that driving is as safe an experience as possible.

Introduction:

More often than not, most people take driving for granted. None of us think of ourselves as unsafe drivers, nor do we spend considerable time pondering over ways to make driving a safer experience. However, statistics tell us that motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death among Americans 1-34 years old ([www.http://www.highwaysafety.org/safety_facts/fatality_facts/general.htm](http://www.highwaysafety.org/safety_facts/fatality_facts/general.htm)). Furthermore, the state of Kansas ranks fourth per capita in the number of traffic deaths caused by speeding, tailgating, changing lanes unsafely, running stoplights or other risky driving, according to the Surface Transportation Policy Project. Therefore, this issue of *City Safe* will focus on driving safety as Kansas citizens brace themselves for the winter ahead.

Driving Basics

The first rule of driving is safety. Whether driving for your employer or for yourself, never take chances that may prove to be unsafe. And if there are passengers in your vehicle, don't forget, you are responsible for their lives as well as your own. Stay calm and alert while you are at the wheel. If you become sleepy or don't feel well while driving, pull over and stop at the first available chance. Courtesy while driving is another name for safe behavior. In addition to having a respect for others on the road, obey the speed limit and all other laws. Allow plenty of distance between your car and other vehicles and always signal your intentions at the appropriate moments. If a tailgater tries to force you to speed up, slow down and let that vehicle pass. Most importantly, remember: alcohol and driving do not mix.

While driving in a normal state, however, there are still hazards that may be difficult to negotiate. Here are a few fairly common emergency situations and how you can handle them:

- If your brakes should fail when you try to use them, stay calm. Pump the pedal; this may restore the brake. If it does not, you can use the parking brake, but don't jam it too hard because on a curve this can cause a spin. You can also try downshifting to slow the car. If all else fails and the situation is extreme, sideswipe a curb, guard rail or some other stationery object, rather than hitting another car head on.

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- A collision with an oncoming vehicle is one of the most dangerous types of accidents you can have. Your best chances of survival are in dodging to the right. Even if you will hit something along the road or another car going your way you are more likely to survive than in a head-on crash.
 - Another frightening possibility when driving is that your accelerator might get stuck. If this occurs, you should try to unstick the peddle by pulling up with the toe of your shoe. If there is a passenger beside you, ask that person to try to pull the accelerator up. Do not take your eyes off the road to try to free the accelerator. If the peddle doesn't release, shift into neutral or press down on the clutch. Pull over, stop, and shut off the ignition.
 - Blowouts are a pretty common type of vehicular accident. If a front tire should blow out, the car will pull to the side that the blowout is on. Try to steer against the pull. Don't put on the brake. Instead, hang on to the wheel and try to stay in your lane. Slow down a little at a time and pull off the road.
 - If you are forced off the road into deep water, escape through the window as quickly as possible. If power windows have short circuited and you are stuck inside, try the door. Keep pushing against water pressure until water begins to fill the compartment and the pressure equalizes. The door will then be easier to open.
 - Everyone has stories about going into a skid, particularly in nasty weather. In this situation, never put your foot on the brake. Instead, take your foot off the gas and turn the wheel into the skid. This should help you regain control. Be ready, however, for the car to skid in the opposite direction. Again, turn the wheel into the skid and to straighten the car.

Tips for Driving under Various Conditions

Night Driving

- Make sure mirrors, lights, and windshield are clean.
- Never wear sunglasses at night.
- Check to see if headlights are properly aimed.
- After dark, give your eyes a chance to adjust before starting to drive.
- Turn headlights on before dusk so other drivers can see your car.
- If lights from an oncoming car make it difficult to see the road, focus on the right edge of the pavement. The human eye takes seven seconds to recover from headlight glare.
- Reduce speed; you should be able to stop in the distance provided by your headlights.

Rain and Fog

- Keep windshield wipers on. Make sure they are in good repair.
- Turn on the defroster and/or fan to cut condensation on the inside of the car windows.
- In fog, roll down the side window part way so you can hear better.
- Keep headlights on low beam.
- Slow down but keep moving. Don't stop unless you can get completely off the road.
- On wet pavement, apply brakes smoothly and evenly.

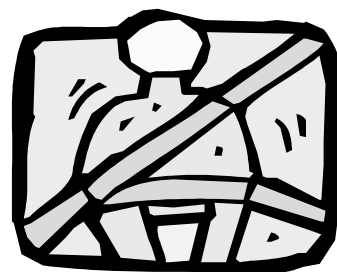
Winter Driving

- Slow down on ice or snow. Braking distances on ice can increase from 4 to 10 times normal. Avoid slamming on the brakes; use an even, quick, pumping action for rear-wheel drive and slow, steady pressure for front-wheel drive.
- In case of a skid, turn the front wheels in the direction of the skid.
- When coming to an icy spot, slow down gradually to retain more control of your vehicle.
- Keep the windshield washer reservoir completely full.
- Completely clear both front and back windows of snow. A peephole is not enough.
- Make sure you have proper snow tires or all-weather radials in good condition.
- Give yourself extra time to get where you need to go.
- On bright days, wear a good pair of sunglasses or use the sun visor.

Other Topics in Driving Safety

Seat Belt Safety

It is imperative that you wear your seat belt each and every time you drive because motor vehicle accidents account for more than 50,000 fatalities and millions of disabling injuries yearly and is the major cause of work-related deaths—more than one-third. By not wearing your seatbelt, you become more likely to be thrown out of your vehicle and 25 times more likely to be killed.



Defensive Driving

Defensive driving is driving to prevent accidents, in spite of the incorrect actions of others or adverse weather conditions. Anticipate driving hazards and know how to protect yourself from them. Be alert while driving by keeping your mind free of distractions and your attention focused on driving; alertness involves watching and recognizing accident-causing factors instantly. The professional driver has foresight, the ability to size up traffic situations as far ahead as possible. The driver must anticipate traffic problems that are likely to develop and decide whether these developments could be dangerous.

Road Rage

Is there anyone here who hasn't read at least one horror story about an angry motorist taking "revenge"—even to the extent of a fatal shooting—against someone who cut in front of him, or sounded a horn too loud or too often? More to the point, is there any one of us (including myself) who hasn't been severely annoyed by someone who tailgated us or who wouldn't move over to let us on the highway? Unfortunately, nowadays an angry response from us may be like waving the cape in front of the bull—asking for real trouble. So in a sense, your own anger has put you in danger.

What should you do when you encounter this kind of situation on the road—either in another driver or, for that matter, in yourself? First of all, exert whatever effort it takes to refocus your mind. Ask yourself whether your true goal is to win some kind of competition with the other drivers on the road, to get where you're going a little faster, or to reach your destination in one piece by being a cool head rather than a hothead. Concentrate on not allowing the situation to escalate. Don't let either your own anger or the other driver's put your safety at risk. Patiently remind yourself that the more courteous driver—you—is the better driver—you. So yield the right-of-way even to someone who obviously isn't proceeding in the right way. Then congratulate yourself on having been wise enough to avoid a confrontation in what could very likely have been a lose-lose situation.

Backing Up

Most backing-up accidents occur at speeds under five miles per hour. But they still result in significant damage to vehicles and other property, may even cause serious injury, and are sure to wreck the driver's safety record. Reviewing and following safe backing practices can reduce such accidents. The following are some tips that can make backing up safer.

1. Use all mirrors when backing—right, left, rear, and the overhead too if there is one. You can't see any of the mirrors if you are hanging out of the driver's door to see what is behind you. Besides, you could damage the door if it strikes an object.
2. If you miss your turn at an intersection, don't back around a corner to change direction. Instead, drive on and around the block. The extra few minutes might save someone else's car from a dent.
3. If you have to park in a driveway, back in if possible, so that when leaving, you can drive forward rather than backing into the street.

Safe Driving Checklist

Obey the Law

- Observe speed limits.
- Obey traffic signs and signals.
- Pass other vehicles only on the left; signal your intention before changing lanes.
- Never pass a stopped school bus.
- Yield to drivers who have the right of way.
- Never drive under the influence of alcohol or other drugs.
- Use your seat belt

Drive Sensibly and Defensively

- Never "tailgate;" stay at least two seconds behind the driver ahead of you.
- Don't insist on your own right-of-way if the other driver will not yield it.
- Dim your headlights for oncoming cars and those ahead.
- Be aware of what's happening several vehicle lengths ahead and behind you.
- Expect the unexpected:
 - Reckless behavior from other drivers
 - People, or animals darting into the road
 - Swerving cyclists
 - Potholes or debris in the roadway

Take Bad Weather Precautions

- Improve visibility:
 - Use wipers, defroster, and headlights
 - Counter glare from sun or snow with sunglasses
 - Clear snow from hood, roof, and all windows

Answers to Safety Quiz on page 6

True: 1,2,5,9 Explanations: **3.** False. People who wear seat belts are less likely to be killed or seriously injured in accidents. **4.** False. Speed limits should always be obeyed. Failing to do so can cause accidents and tickets. **6.** False. They can cause blinding glare for the vehicle in front of you or one coming from the other direction. **7.** False. Take your foot off the gas. **8.** False. Cars may dart in or out, overheat, etc. Stay very alert. **10.** False. Yellow means stop unless you're already in the intersection.

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- When visibility is poor or roadways are slick:
 - Reduce speed
 - Increase distance from car ahead
 - Brake gently
 - Watch out for puddles, icy patches, sudden pockets of fog.
 - If you skid, steer gently "into it," not using brakes or gas.

Maintain Your Vehicle

- Don't abuse it by driving too fast over bumpy terrain.
- Don't make unnecessarily sharp turns or sudden stops and starts.
- Be sure that scheduled maintenance checks are carried out on time.
- Be alert to below-par performance of any equipment; have it attended to promptly.

Safety Quiz (answers on page 5)

1. Motor vehicle accidents are the leading cause of accidental deaths.
__ True__ False
2. About half of all fatal motor vehicle accidents involve drivers who were drinking alcohol.
__ True__ False
3. People who wear seatbelts are just as likely to be killed in an accident as people who do not.
__ True__ False
4. You have to obey speed limits unless traffic is very light.
__ True__ False
5. To be safe, you should stay at least two seconds behind the vehicle in front of you.
__ True__ False
6. You should always use your headlights' high beams when driving at night.
__ True__ False
7. If you lose control of your car when driving through water, you should step on the gas.
__ True__ False
8. In very heavy traffic, drivers don't have to pay as much attention to road conditions and other vehicles.
__ True__ False
9. The best time to check tire pressure is when tires are cold.
__ True__ False
10. Yellow traffic lights mean you should go quickly.
__ True__ False

Resources

The following websites that are dedicated to highway and driving safety:

- > Kansas Department of Transportation
915 Harrison, Room 754 - Docking State Office Building
Topeka, KS 66612-1568 phone: 785-296-3585
<http://www.ink.org/public/kdot/>

- > National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
901 LOCUST ST, RM 466
KANSAS CITY, MO 64106 Phone (816) 329-3900 / Fax (816) 329-3910
email: region7@nhtsa.dot.gov

Did You Know?

- Highway fatalities accounted for 1 in every 5 of the 6,210 job-related deaths during 1995, and were the leading cause of fatal work injuries.
<http://stats.bls.gov/pub/cwc/1996/Fall/brief4.htm#Introduction>

- A 1999 Kansas ranks fourth and Missouri 11th per capita in the number of traffic deaths caused by speeding, tailgating, changing lanes unsafely, running stoplights or other risky driving, according to the Surface Transportation Policy Project.
For details, see <http://www.kcstar.com/item/pages/home.pat%2Clocal/30daceda.308%2C.html>

A considerable portion of the material presented in this edition of City Safe has been taken from Business and Legal Report's Safety Meetings Library.

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City Safe is a publication of the League of Kansas Municipalities and the Kansas Municipal Insurance Trust for the purposes of educating and informing cities about loss control methods and risk management. If you have any questions concerning KMIT, workers' compensation, or risk management that you would like to see answered in this newsletter, please direct those inquiries to:

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A Note from the Editor...

On the behalf of the KMIT staff, I wish for you, your family, and your community, a safe and happy new year! As we stand on the threshold of yet another year, we are privileged to have our country on one accord concerning our nation's priorities. Part of this understanding includes a renewed emphasis on better communication among various public agencies and officials. Simultaneously, the role of local government as the front-line of democracy has been reinvigorated.

It is KMIT's objective to help Kansas cities meet these ever-changing demands. As our staff works to provide useful information, we invite you to share your comments and opinions about ***City Safe***. Our objective is to publish material that helps you increase employee safety and increase the management capacity of your total organization.

Sincerely,
Mylena Sutton

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