

Before you begin

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Introduction

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The intent of this safety talk is to help explore the topics of road rage and aggressive driving with your employees. Discussing these topics will help drivers recognize the signs, the habits, and the causes of these behaviors. The goal is to help drivers become more mindful of their driving habits, to reduce driver stress, to reduce aggressive driving, and to eliminate road rage. Please use this safety talk to help lead your discussion on this topic.

Definitions

Road rage: The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) defines road rage as an assault with a motor vehicle or other dangerous weapon by the operator or passenger(s) of one motor vehicle or precipitated by an incident that occurred on a roadway.

Aggressive driving: NHTSA defines aggressive driving as occurring when “an individual commits a combination of moving offenses so as to endanger other persons or property.”

Assault: A general definition of assault is when someone intentionally acts in a way to place another person in fear of an immediate harmful or offensive contact.

Discussion

Do most people get in their car with the intentions of driving aggressively or do they drive aggressively because of events that occur during the commute? Is it possible for someone to be in an angry frame of mind when they get into their car? Problems at home or work often get into the car with us. How do these problems impact our mindset when driving?

Do we challenge ourselves to get to our destination in a specific amount of time? Do we get angry at other drivers? How do we react when we get angry? Would you classify the following as aggressive driving?

- Speeding
- Tailgating
- Excessive lane changing
- Horn blowing
- Weaving in and out of traffic
- Speeding to get through intersections
- Speeding to prevent others from merging
- Rolling stops
- Racing

What do other drivers do that annoy you?

- Driving below the speed limit
- Driving the speed limit
- Tailgating
- Excessive speed
- Improper lane changes
- Excessive or sudden braking
- Driving with a blinker on and never turning
- Slow speed in the passing lane

Have you ever been guilty of exhibiting these same behaviors? Every driver is probably guilty of all these behaviors at some point. Why do we hold others at a higher standard when driving than we do ourselves? What expectations should you have when you drive a vehicle?

- I’m a bit late but can make up time on the road.
- If I make all the traffic lights I’ll be on time.
- I should leave early so I can take my time.

What are some reasons drivers (possibly you) may demonstrate aggressive driving?

- Running late?
- Competitiveness?
- Traffic jams?
- In response to aggressive driving by others?
- An emergency?

Every driver has been a new driver at some point in their life. What are common bad driving habits when learning how to drive?

- Weaving
- Sudden stops
- Poor lane changes
- Slow speed
- Misunderstanding of the right of way

Is it possible drivers received improper training that then resulted in bad driving habits? How likely is it that you will encounter drivers with some of the issues we have discussed? How can we change our expectations of traffic and expectations of other drivers to help us manage our stress?

- Leave early when you expect traffic.
- Assume other drivers will make mistakes.
- Assume an aggressive driver has an emergency and simply let them get ahead without being offended.
- Consider that drivers are not purposely attempting to make us angry.
- Consider that our angry response will not change the other driver but rather encourage them to respond in kind.
- Consider that acting aggressively will only increase the risk of an accident.
- Allow others to merge.
- Don't attempt to make up time on the road.
- Simply refuse to let other drivers make us angry.

Have you ever been involved in a road rage incident, either as an offender or a victim? Ask employees to share their story. If you were the offender:

- Were you experiencing other life problems that impacted your driving?
- Was there aggressive driving on your part or another driver?
- Did you take an action on the road personally?
- What did the other driver do that you interpreted as a personal offense?

If you were the victim of road rage:

- Did you contribute in any way to the incident?
- Did you know the offender?
- Did you make eye contact or make an inappropriate gesture?
- How did the situation end?
- What could you have done differently?

What are the potential outcomes from aggressive driving and road rage?

- Citations
- Insurance issues
- Accidents
- Stress
- Anger
- Physical altercations
- Minimal or no gain in time

How can we avoid going down this path?

- Leave early.
- Have reasonable expectations of what you are facing when driving.
- Do not take actions of other drivers personally.
- Allow other drivers to merge – be polite.
- Use your horn to warn others only, not because you are angry.
- Have a good space cushion between you and the car in front of you.
- Recognize that nobody is a perfect driver, even you.
- Avoid making eye contact with other drivers.
- If you feel you are being followed by someone with road rage, drive to a police station or call 911.
- Never tailgate, keep a three-second buffer between you and the car ahead.

Conclusion

It is important to recognize how our driving habits and state of mind impact our driving behaviors. Remember you are in control of how you act and react to others.

We know that aggressive driving behaviors increase the risk of motor vehicle accidents and may even devolve into full-blown road rage. The good news is we can recognize these behaviors and develop good habits to reduce our stress when driving, reduce our risk of motor vehicle accidents, and avoid road rage.

Group Activity

During the discussion, have a volunteer write down the good driving habits on one side of the room. Have a second volunteer write down the bad driving habits on the other side of the room. You can then use these suggestions (from your employees) as gentle reminders to drive safely. Simply print each suggestion on a sheet of paper and post it near the exits so employees see the suggestions before they drive. Change the suggestion every few days to keep them fresh.