

Road Rage

By Amy Stewart, CSP

Before you begin

Think about ways road rage affects you and your fellow employees while driving. The media describes road rage as emotion-based reckless, aggressive and intimidating driving. Ohio law does not have a specific offense for road rage. Actions labeled as "road rage" fall under other offenses. These include menacing, reckless operation, impeding and assault to name a few. Challenge employees to disengage from all forms of road rage, also known as aggressive driving, either for themselves or for the others on the road.

What will you learn

- Contributing factors that may lead to road rage
- What clues identify hazardous situations

Introduction

Road rage is becoming an issue for many and is transforming laws, legislation and consequences like never before. When a driver experiences road rage, the potential to crash a vehicle increases. Let's consider road rage through four emotions: anger, impatience, competing and punishing. Strong emotions, plus driving a motorized vehicle is typically not a good mix, as the driver is not likely to be clearly thinking.

Discussion

Ask each person to provide one (or more) example of road rage for each emotion and give suggestions for how to minimize or mitigate the situation.

Anger

Examples of an angry driver include:

- Fast drivers;
- Slow drivers;
- Getting cut off/cutting off;
- Tailgaters;
- Friends/family telling you to calm down;
- Erratic lane changes;
- Illegal passing;
- Displaying angry behavior at other drivers such as blasting the horn longer than appropriate.

Solutions include:

- Find stress relief;
- Enjoy the journey;
- Give in to the other driver who wants his or her way;
- Play soothing music;
- Think of driving as worthwhile, relaxing and pleasurable;
- Be happy;
- Allow yourself enough time to drive safely to your destination;
- Program your response to "Be my guest;"
- Try to imagine why the other driver is driving that way rather than judging him or her.

Brainstorm other solutions to minimize anger (write on flipchart).

Impatience

Examples include:

- Feeling annoyed, if you think the car is driving too slowly and you cannot pass;
- Feeling pressure, wanting to be there already, waiting for passengers to get in, won't let car engine warm up, stoplights, waiting in lines, waiting for parking space;
- As a passenger;
- Impatient with driver;
- Irritated when car ahead slows down;
- Intolerant when behind schedule;
- Edgy driving in far right/slow lane;
- Irked with pedestrians crossing street.

Solutions include:

- Don't get mad at people who follow the speed limit – it's the law, and some people follow it;
- The most important actions you can take are inside your head;
- Change up your approach to driving;
- Act as if the driver that makes you impatient is a guest in your home.

Brainstorm suggestions to minimize impatience (write on flipchart).

Competing

Examples include:

- Compete on the road;
- Contest with self;
- Compete with other drivers;
- Challenge other drivers; race other drivers;
- Compete with vehicles at tollbooth lines;
- Compete with drivers who challenge you;
- Compete to amuse yourself, drag race adjacent car at stop lights.

Solutions include:

- The more you speed, the less you experience your surroundings, slow down;
- Enjoy the ride with your companions. Making it to your destination safely is more important than winning;
- Allow more time for your trips.

Brainstorm suggestions to minimize competing (write on flipchart).

Punishing

Examples include:

- Complaining to passengers about other drivers;
- Cursing at other drivers;
- Making obscene gestures;
- Blocking cars trying to pass cars or trying to change lanes;
- Riding close to another car's bumper;
- Braking suddenly to punish tailgater;
- Using high beams to punish bad driver;
- Seeking personal encounter with bad driver.

Solutions include:

- Punishing is a job that should be left to police;
- Taking things into your own hands is apt to escalate the situation and make matters worse
- Steer clear of punishing. If you believe another driver is attempting to start a fight, seek help – head for a police station. Do not get out of your car, and avoid going home alone;
- In some states, there are special telephone numbers to report aggressive drivers. In Ohio, call 1-800-GRAB DUI.

Brainstorm suggestions to minimize punishing (write on flipchart).

There are several strategies to minimize the potential dangers of road rage.

- Do not react to provocation; don't offend, don't engage.
- Stay away from erratic drivers; steer clear.
- Avoid eye contact with aggressive drivers.
- Use your horn sparingly.
- Do not make obscene gestures.
- Do not switch lanes without signaling.
- Do not block the passing lane.
- Do not tailgate.
- When parking, do not take more than one parking space.
- Be polite and courteous even if other drivers are not.
- Emotions cause commotions, adjust the attitude, forget winning, get help.
- Avoid conflict, and allow plenty of time for your trip.

Conclusion

1. Make sure employees understand the potential personal costs of road rage, including crashes, injuries, disabilities and loss of life to self and others.
2. Review the suggestions generated from the group discussion and plan ahead.
3. Make sure employees understand company policy regarding road rage, and the consequences, ranging from discipline or retraining to loss of job.

References

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