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Defensive Driving Accident Prevention Formula

A defensive driver is prepared to react to any hazards while driving.

To predict the outcome of a driving situation and prevent an accident, the defensive driver applies the Accident Prevention Formula:

1. Recognize the Hazard
2. Understand the Defense
3. Act in Time

Recognize the Hazard

Recognizing the hazards involves knowing what the hazards are, anticipating or predicting the hazards and visually seeing them.

What is the weather like? How does the weather affect the roads you will be traveling on? Are you mentally prepared to drive? Is the vehicle in disrepair? All of these questions begin the process of understanding what hazards may be present while driving and should be asked prior to entering the vehicle.

Anticipating hazards involves taking the knowledge of possible hazards and visually seeing the signs of their appearance. To see the hazards you must look in the right place for them. Utilizing the eye lead time, looking well ahead of the vehicle then focusing inward from there, then side to side checking mirrors, then starting the process over again. Fixed stares lead to mental lapses and hazards are not seen.

Understand the Defense

Once a hazard is identified you have three options to defend against it:

- Brake
- Steer
- Communicate your presence

Slowing down is the primary response to any hazard. Reducing speed is the best way to avoid an accident or minimize the impact. If a hazard is anticipated you will be able to brake while retaining control of your vehicle.

Steering appropriately to avoid the hazard such as oncoming vehicles in your lane is the next defense against collisions. Controlling steering to take the best path can sometimes mean colliding with the least harmful object such as sideswiping a vehicle or running into a bush versus hitting an oncoming vehicle.

Sounding your horn is the primary way to communicate your presence to prevent an accident. Signals also alert other road users of your intentions so that an accident is avoided. Signal early and use your horn sparingly to ensure full effectiveness.



Knowing your business matters.

Act In Time

When you recognize the hazard and understand the defense, all that is left is for you to act appropriately in time. Never assume that a hazard will correct itself, the sooner you react, the more time you'll have to avoid an accident.

During your next Safety Meeting, discuss the Accident Prevention Formula using the following examples:

- You're driving down a two-lane highway, there is a person walking in the same direction as you along the road.
- How does your formula change if instead of an adult it is a child riding a bike along the road?
- How does your formula change if there are construction barriers along the shoulder?

- How does your formula change if you notice an oncoming vehicle passing another and it looks like it will complete the pass in plenty of time?

In each of these situations explore what the hazards are, what the defense is, and what will be the effect if the defense can be applied in time.

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