



DRIVING SMART



Everyday, most of us get into our cars and drive somewhere. Whether we go to work or to a social outing, we rely on our vehicles to get us where we need to go.

For many, driving has become second nature and we feel more and more confident behind the wheel. However, too many Canadians take driving for granted. Drivers who do not question their driving skills can easily fall into some careless driving habits and outdated practices.

A recent study by the Traffic Injury Research Foundation found that Canadians are becoming concerned that there are too many people who have aggressive driving habits such as speeding, running red lights, tailgating, weaving in and out of traffic, and unsafe passing. Another growing concern is that people are becoming more distracted and are not paying enough attention to the road.

Transport Canada and the Ontario Ministry of Transportation have

also found a rise in the number of people who fall asleep at the wheel and who drive when they're tired. With more of these unsafe practices occurring on the road, the risk for a traffic collision increases dramatically.

This brochure will help you become more aware of safe driving practices and what you can do to help prevent unwanted traffic collisions. Remember, driving smart is driving safe!

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE!

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|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. We all have some responsibility in helping to keep our roads safe. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 2. In a recent survey, 92% of Ontarians admitted to driving aggressively. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 3. You should use vehicle turn signals for turns and lane changes after you begin to turn. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 4. Taking a driving trainer workshop is a good way to refresh your knowledge about safe driving habits. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 5. Car safety kits usually include items such as first aid kits, booster cables, flashlight, batteries and a fire extinguisher. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 6. You should always assume that other drivers' mistakes are directed at you. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 7. It is unsafe to put on make-up or comb your hair when driving. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 8. Driver distraction accounts for about 20% of traffic collisions in Ontario. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 9. Make it a habit to use your cell phone only when you're parked or pulled safely off to the side of the road. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 10. You should slow down in areas with high pedestrian traffic. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

see answers on back panel

Driving smart and safe can have benefits for you and others by:

Preventing a serious injury to yourself, a loved one or another driver.

Preventing license suspensions, criminal charges or a jail sentence you might receive.

Feeling good about yourself by making a contribution to having safer roads and acting as a role model to others, especially kids.

Saving money on things like auto insurance, fines or on auto repairs.



Why THE CONCERN FOR ROAD SAFETY?

In 2001, it is estimated that 850 fatalities and 235,000 collisions occurred in Ontario. Many of these have been linked to unsafe driving habits. In fact, added together, aggressive driving (30%), driving while fatigued (35%) and driving while distracted (20%) account for more than 80% of all vehicle collisions.

These statistics are reinforced by the fact that 92% of Ontarians recently surveyed admitted to driving aggressively in the last year, the highest

rate in Canada. It is also disturbing to note that the prevalence of aggressive driving has been rising steadily.

High risk driving habits can have a tremendous physical, social and financial impact on all of us. They can lead to the death or serious injury of yourself, a family member or friend. In addition, a serious injury can cause personal financial hardships such as a loss of income and costs associated with lengthy and expensive rehabilitation.

Socially, traffic collisions result in higher insurance costs for us all. Not only do they place a tremendous toll on emergency services including police, fire and ambulance, they also place higher costs on our already over-burdened health care system.

We all pay the price for the high costs of unsafe driving, both individually and collectively. The solution starts with what you do the next time you get behind the wheel.

How CAN I MAKE OUR ROADS

Get Started

First, we must all accept some responsibility for the prevalence of traffic collisions by agreeing to improve our own driving habits. As a first step, it is important for you to review your own driving habits. Are you an aggressive driver? Do you drive when you are over-tired? Do you focus on non-driving related tasks when you are driving?

If you find yourself doing any of the following, then you need to take a safer approach to driving. Of course, the more unsafe driving habits you have, the more urgent the need to change.

- Speeding
- Running red lights or “rolling” stops at stop signs
- Tailgating
- Weaving in and out of traffic
- Getting frustrated with other drivers
- Not yielding to pedestrians or driving too close to cyclists

- Yawning frequently or daydreaming
- Driving when you have had less than six hours of sleep
- Eating and drinking when you drive
- Trying to read when driving
- Using your cell phone while driving
- Engaging in personal grooming while driving
- Trying to adjust your in-vehicle controls, including the stereo or mirrors.

All of these driving habits can be a hazard to your health or another road user if you don't take action to improve them.

Take Steps

Once you are aware of your unsafe driving habits, you need to make changes right away. Here are some tips that can help prevent or reduce the risk that you will be involved in a traffic collision:

- Reduce your stress when you drive by making sure to give yourself extra time before heading out to work, on a trip or to other destinations.
- Be sure all of your interior controls are set (e.g. steering wheel and seat positions, stereo, rear and side-view mirrors, etc.) prior to starting your drive.
- Get comfortable. Wear clothes and footwear that don't restrict your safe operation of the car.
- Accept that if you can't control the traffic, you can control your reactions to it.
- Assume other drivers' mistakes are not directed at you personally. Be courteous even if other drivers are not and focus on avoiding all conflict with them.
- When driving for long periods, stop to rest every 2 hours and plan ahead where your stops will be.
- Keep your vehicle temperature cool

What ARE THE CHALLENGES TO ROAD SAFETY?

The most significant barrier to practicing safe driving habits for many of us is our own attitudes about road safety. We have a tendency to feel that it's always the other driver, not us, who has poor driving habits. The challenge is in accepting that we all share responsibility in helping to keep our roads safe.

We also live in a time when our roads and our lives are busier. We must do more in less time, and always find ourselves in a hurry.

We need to stop and think before getting behind the wheel. We need to think of the possible consequences of our own driving habits, and our reactions to the driving habits of others. Many traffic collisions can be prevented but only when we accept the need to take stock of our own driving habits, followed up with real changes to the way we drive.

SAFER TO DRIVE ON?

and keep your eyes moving.

- Put reading material and all other usual distractions in the trunk.
- Make it a habit to use your cell phone only when you're parked. If you have a passenger, let them take the call or have it go to voice mail.
- Do your personal grooming before you get into the car to drive.
- It may sound obvious but slow down and don't tailgate - advice that's always worth repeating!
- When entering a construction zone, slow down and merge early when road lanes are reduced. Watch out for construction workers and their vehicles. You could face larger fines and license suspensions if involved in a construction zone collision or other traffic violation.
- Remember, the law requires you to stop when you meet a school bus while driving in either direction if its overhead red signal lights are flashing

in the front and rear. You can be penalized six demerit points and up to \$2,000 for a first time offence.

- To help identify your specific aggressive driving habits, take the interactive self test at www.aaafoundation.org/quizzes

Stick To It

The consequences of not changing bad driving habits are substantial. Once you identify a bad habit, make yourself a promise to change it right away. Also, think about how upset you get when others tailgate you or cut you off when changing lanes. Finally, think about how good it feels to be a positive role model to your children.

Celebrate

Reward yourself for practicing safe driving habits by taking a road trip. Take a day or a weekend and travel somewhere that you would love to visit.

Go for it!

RESOURCES

Ontario Ministry of Transportation
Road conditions and safety information
1-800-268-4686

Canadian Safety Council
General safety information
1-613-739-1535

Transport Canada
Information on road safety
1-800-333-0371

Windsor Occupational Health
Information Service (WOHIS)
258-5157

Local Driving Schools

Brain Injury Association of
Windsor-Essex County
254-0097

WEBSITES

Transport Canada
www.tc.gc.ca

Ontario Ministry of Transportation
www.mto.gov.on.ca

Canada Safety Council
www.safety-council.org/

Traffic Injury Research Foundation
www.trafficinjuryresearch.com

Canadian Automobile Association
www.caa.ca/e/home

Drivers.com
www.drivers.com

SmartRisk
www.smartrisk.ca/

www.wehealthunit.org and at
www.windsor-heart-health.com

CLIP & KEEP THIS INFO!

Tips to Help You Drive Smart

- Use your signal lights for turns and lane changes well before you begin to slow down to turn.
- Pass other vehicles only on the left.
- Don't block passing lanes.
- Don't have emotional or complex conversations with others in the car while driving.
- Be courteous to other road users like cyclists and pedestrians by giving them extra room.
- Always slow down in areas with high pedestrian traffic such as school and construction zones, city streets and mall parking lots.
- Don't rely on caffeinated beverages (e.g. coffee, colas) for an energy boost if you're tired. No amount of caffeine will prevent driver fatigue.
- When an emergency vehicle is approaching slow down and move carefully to the right side of the road and stop.
- If you cannot see a train approaching at a railway crossing, then slow down and listen for warning signals and trains.
- Stay out of drivers' blind spots, especially large trucks.
- Keep a safe distance of at least two seconds behind other vehicles.

Pass it on!

Please feel free to copy any articles in this brochure as long as you acknowledge the source.

Make it happen at your workplace!

Here are some suggestions to encourage and support smart driving by employers and employees:

- Don't get ready for work in your car. Make sure to eat and do your grooming activities such as shaving or putting on make-up before you drive to work.
- Stay relaxed and focused when driving to work. Traffic congestion can become frustrating for many of us who drive at peak commuter times. Remember that you can't control the amount of traffic out there but you can control your own actions.
- Listen to the radio or television to check for road conditions such as construction or the weather. Be prepared to plan an alternate work route.
- If you feel you are too tired to drive home after work, then don't. Driver fatigue is a form of impairment. Instead, call a friend or family member to pick you up. Or, ask a fellow employee to drive you home.
- Take a safe driving course. These courses can teach new driver safety tricks as well as remind us of the ones we know, but don't always practice.
- If you have company vehicles, keep safety kits in them in case of emergencies. These kits usually contain such items as first aid kits, booster cables, flashlight, batteries, fire extinguisher, etc.
- Consider a policy that restricts cell phone use while driving on company business. Employees would then carry a cell phone, if necessary, but only use it when parked or pulled safely off to the side of the road.

"Please be patient when you wait at a red light. After all, the red light was patient enough to wait for you!"

A. Guillois

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Answers (from front page): 1-T • 2-T • 3-F • 4-T • 5-T • 6-F • 7-T • 8-T • 9-T • 10-T



This brochure and others in this series available online at:
www.wehealthunit.org and at www.windsor-heart-health.com