



# TDCJ Risk Management's Training Circular

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# APRIL

## Rolling, Rolling, Rolling, Keep your vehicle rolling



**SPRING** is in the air with the smell of fresh cut grass, the colorful flowers, and the warm sun on your back. The smell of BBQ on the outside grill, playing football, baseball or volleyball with friends and family makes us excited about Spring. Going camping and sitting out by the fire, roasting hotdogs and marshmallows on the open flame. Sitting on the river bank taking a short nap, while the fish is stealing your bait off of your fishing line or riding around in your convertible with the top down, letting your hair blow in the wind are things we all look forward to.



While riding around you need

to ensure you do this carefully, so come on

**Let's go cruising** around with some driver safety tips.



### Pay Attention

**"I never saw him!"** is the most common excuse heard after a collision. Was the other vehicle invisible?



Virtually all collisions involve inattention on the part of one or both drivers. Inattention can involve many things, some of which are daydreaming, distractions, sleepiness, fatigue, **"highway hypnosis,"** talking, and etc.



**A moving vehicle** develops thousands of foot-pounds of energy. **YOU** as a driver have the responsibility not to use that energy to injure or kill others, or damage their property. Paying attention makes it possible for you to see, recognize and avoid the hazards lurking on the road; these are the three basic elements of defensive driving. The primary attribute necessary for a safe driver is alertness, and paying attention is the most important driving task because it helps create the time you need to recognize hazards and avoid a collision.



**One statistic often quoted** is that most collisions happen within a short distance from home. Why is this true? Since we mostly drive in our own

neighborhoods, the odds are we'll have most of our mishaps there. Close to home we get more comfortable and perhaps let our guard down (and the other guy does the same thing); you've heard that "familiarity breeds contempt?" Better yet, familiarity breeds inattention. We don't often consider that serious or fatal injuries can occur in low speed collisions. When you are driving on "**autopilot**," you have turned control of your vehicle over to those other drivers - you are at their mercy. **Their fate is your fate.**



### Yield!!

"**Nobody ever yielded their way into a collision.**" Think about it. If you are in doubt about who has the right of way, **give it away**. The other guy may be wrong, but you can end up hurt or dead. We often say no one **HAS** the right-of-way until it is yielded to them. Right of way rules are often misunderstood, and there are situations where the rules may not be clear to everyone. If there is uncertainty about which vehicle should have the right of way, give the other guy the road. When it comes to



driving safely, **it's not the principle, but the outcome.**

### Don't Speed!!

**Driving at a higher than reasonable speed** increases your risk in two ways: it cuts your reaction time and results in more "**stored**" energy (that must be dissipated in any collision). You should consider if the risks are worth the gain.

**This is the science of math and physics** - you cannot bend these rules. Each incremental increase in speed reduces your ability to react in time to hazards, because you may be covering distance in less time than it takes to react. Normal reaction time is between .75 second and 1.5 seconds, on average. Average reaction time distance at 50



mph would be approximately 83 feet. At 70 mph, it is over 115 feet (over 7 modern car lengths). These numbers do not include braking distance, just reaction time. The average difference in reaction-time distance from 50 mph to 70 mph is about 32 feet. If you were relying solely on braking, any hazard you encounter within the reaction distance is already a problem; you can't react quickly enough to miss it. This is particularly important at night, when darkness restricts

your visibility. Do you know at what distance your headlights will illuminate a hazard? How is your night vision these days? When headlights finally light up a road hazard, it is often too late to avoid it. Many experts would tell you that even 50 mph is too fast for conditions at night, on any dark roadway.

### Don't Drive Impaired

**First, let's define "impairment."** Webster's New World Dictionary defines impairment as "making something worse, less, weaker, or damaged." Applied to driving, impairment means there is a factor present that decreases your ability to operate your vehicle safely.



### Wear Your Seat Belt!

**Without a doubt, seat belts are the most significant safety device ever invented.** Seat belts do several things for you. They provide impact protection, they absorb crash forces, and they keep you from being thrown out of the vehicle. Modern vehicles are built with "crumple zones," and seat belts are an integral part of the system. The belts hold you in place while the vehicle collapses around your "safe"

zone. Belts help keep you in your place, in control, and better able to avoid a crash. Yet for all these benefits, folks have lots of "reasons" why they don't wear them.



- **"They wrinkle my clothes."** Absolutely, they do!!
- **"They're uncomfortable."** Maybe so, but you can adjust them so they fit better. If you need to have your belts adjusted to fit, see your dealer.
- **"I want to be thrown clear of the vehicle in a crash." Oh yes, PLEASE, on my head!** By the way, that's the number one cause of death in vehicle crashes.
- **"I don't want to be trapped if there's a collision, or my vehicle ends up in the water, or on fire."** Wearing belts increases the likelihood you will be conscious after impact, less injured, and more able to get out. Seat belt failure or jamming isn't common.
- **"The government can't tell ME what to do! It's a free country!"** Yes, it is. But what about other people's rights? When you don't wear belts and get injured, what happens when your insurance runs out?

- **"I've heard of people who were in crashes who would have been killed if they'd been wearing belts."** If a collision can kill you with a belt on, then you're out of luck without the belt also, unless by a fluke. What we want is good odds. The statistics show that seat belts would prevent roughly 50% of deaths and injuries.
- **What about others who ride with you - what if they won't wear belts?** Would you say **no** ride for them. In any collision, unbelted passengers become flying objects - you can be injured if you are struck from behind by an unbelted passenger, even with your belt on.
- **Here's one last argument.** If involved in a crash without belts, you may be held partially responsible for your own injuries, even if the other guy is mostly at fault in the crash.



Which one do you want to be???

### Don't Run Red!

First, there are **two** basic types of red light runners - there's the daydreamer or distracted driver who just doesn't see it, and then there's the driver who's impatient and accelerates on the yellow signal instead of stopping and waiting the average 45 seconds of a signal cycle! Some are guilty of both offenses. Are we really in that much of a hurry? Running red lights kills hundreds of us every year.



### Drive Precisely!

**Sloppy driving breeds mishaps!** Most everyone knows the basics of the traffic laws; signaling, proper lane position for turns, turning into the proper lanes, complying with traffic signs (like "No U-Turns," "No right turn on red," etc.), driving to the right except when passing, passing across double yellow stripes, really **STOPPING** for stop signs, and many others. Drivers ignore them for the sake of expediency every day. We are so impatient to get about the details of our lives that we



don't take the time to do it "right." One estimate is that average drivers commit 2.5 traffic violations every mile they drive! But, those pesky, nit-picky driving rules **ARE** important.

**Why is it important to follow all the little rules** that don't seem to make much difference? Because it works the same way in the motoring world. Traffic rules are in place to create the consistency and uniformity that allow us to predict with some degree of confidence what the other guy is going to do, thereby avoiding conflicts and collisions. Ignoring the rules of the road helps create the chaos you see every day. So, drive precisely, follow the rules, and watch out for the other guy!

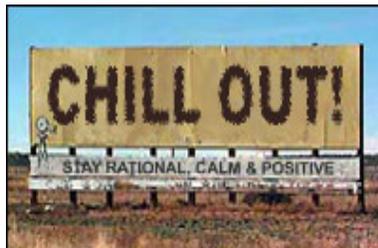
### Chill Out!

**Driving safely is all about attitude.** Think about it - if you've been driving for a while, you know most all the rules - **OK**, so maybe you do need a refresher occasionally - and you know how to drive "defensively." You may not think you do - but you do. You learn by surviving to drive another day. What we often lose sight of are the dangers of driving - it is such a normal part of our lives that we don't consciously think about how dangerous it really is. Think-

ing about this occasionally is a good thing.

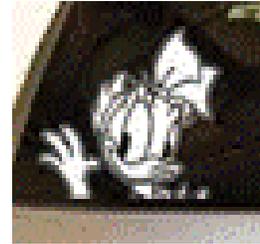
**Since we all make mistakes in our driving**, it goes without saying that at any given moment, other drivers are doing exactly that - making mistakes, not intentionally malicious moves. When other drivers do something wrong, shouldn't our reaction be to let it slide, chalk it up to unintentional human error, the same as we hope they'd do for us?

**Remember these words: "It doesn't matter."** When other drivers make mistakes, or are rude (even intentionally), what do you gain by letting it affect your attitude or behavior? It doesn't matter. In ten minutes, you won't even remember that it happened. Since we are all human, we can't be perfect all the time. Don't let the error the other driver commits be the reason you lose control (one way or another) and have a collision, or worse. Many collisions occur when a driver is mad, upset, stressed, or distracted in some way. **Try to keep your attitude rational, calm and positive.**



The next time you get into your vehicle, think about these driving tips before you go. For additional information on vehicle safety see TDCJ Intranet Risk Management Training.

**Happy cruising!!**



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