

# Risky road behaviors and how your drivers can help avoid them



Aggressive driving should not be confused with road rage, which rises to the level of intentional assault.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) defines aggressive driving as actions that directly affect other road users by placing them in unnecessary danger.<sup>1</sup> Think risky behaviors such as speeding, running red lights, failure to yield, following too closely and improper passing.

Although aggressive driving is a crime in some but not all states, it should not be confused with road rage, which rises to the level of intentional assault.

In states with laws against aggressive driving, the operator must often demonstrate more than one action to be considered aggressive.<sup>2</sup> When a police officer sees such actions, the violation can escalate from a simple infraction to an aggressive driving charge with higher penalties.

Aggressive driving is risky driving — whether it's your employee or the other motorist who's at fault. Here are some tips you can give to your drivers to help them avoid both types of scenarios.

## How to respond when other drivers get aggressive

Your safety and ability to control your vehicle are your primary defense against aggressive drivers. First and foremost, don't allow the other driver to upset you. When confronted with an aggressive driver, you should:

- **Move out of the way, if possible.** Allowing the other driver to pass or slowing down in a neighboring lane can help prevent an accident.
- **Avoid eye contact.** Sometimes this can make the situation worse.
- **Ignore gestures from the aggressive driver.** Making gestures in response to other drivers will only antagonize them.
- **Call the police if the situation escalates.** It's possible for aggressive drivers to cross the line to road rage. Don't stop your vehicle unless you're in a public area where you feel safe.

<sup>1</sup> "Countermeasures That Work: A Highway Safety Countermeasure Guide for State Highway Safety Offices, Seventh Edition, 2013," National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (April 2013), p. 152.

<sup>2</sup> "Speeding and Aggressive Driving," Governors Highway Safety Association, [http://www.ghsa.org/html/stateinfo/laws/aggressivedriving\\_laws.html](http://www.ghsa.org/html/stateinfo/laws/aggressivedriving_laws.html) (downloaded July 10, 2017).

## Tips to help keep your cool and avoid driving aggressively

Factors such as stress, fatigue and tight schedules can induce a general disregard for others, which may lead to making you the aggressive driver. To help avoid becoming a danger to yourself and others on the road, use these reminders for maintaining good behavior:

- **Adjust your seat position and mirrors** to reduce stress and discomfort before leaving on a trip.
- **Get proper rest and nutrition** regularly to reduce the effects of drowsiness and hunger.
- **Plan your route and schedule** in advance to avoid frustration from delays or detours.
- **Delay your trip if you've had an emotional event**, such as a heated conversation. Take time to settle down before attempting to drive.
- **Always wear your safety belt** while driving to keep you in the proper position and help protect you if a crash occurs.
- **Remain calm** behind the wheel despite other drivers' behavior. Pull over at a safe place and take a break if something unsettling occurs.
- **Avoid distractions** like eating, drinking, grooming and using your cellphone (even hands-free devices).
- **Signal your turns** far enough in advance to make other drivers aware of your intentions.
- **Stay within posted speed limits** and adjust accordingly for changes in road conditions.
- **Position the vehicle in the outside lane** at least a mile prior to exiting.
- **Leave enough following distance** between your vehicle and the one ahead, regardless of their speed.
- **Accept that if you leave late, you'll arrive late.** Don't try to make up for lost time by speeding or ignoring traffic rules.
- **Avoid alcohol and drug abuse.** Also, if taking prescription medicines, be aware of side effects that may affect your ability to drive.
- **Complete pre-trip inspections** of your vehicle to help spot potential mechanical problems that can be handled at the terminal.



Wearing a safety belt keeps you in proper driving position and can help protect you if a crash occurs.

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