Safe driving toolbox talk: defensive driving

29 CFR 1926.601, 1926.21

Date _____ Trainer _____ Location _____

Opening question

Have you ever avoided a crash because you saw another driver's mistake coming before it happened?

Why it matters

You cannot control how other people drive, but you can control your speed, your space and where you look. Defensive driving means driving to prevent crashes even when someone else does something wrong. It protects you, your crew and everyone else on the road.

Key points

1. **Expect other drivers to make mistakes**
   Assume the other driver has not seen you, might run the light or might pull out in front of you. Watch for clues like a car drifting in its lane, front wheels starting to turn or a driver looking down at a phone. When you expect a mistake, you have time to react instead of being caught by surprise.

2. **Keep a space cushion**
   Leave enough room ahead of you to stop if the vehicle in front stops suddenly. Add more room in rain, fog, darkness and heavy traffic, and when you are pulling a trailer. Try to keep an open lane or shoulder beside you so you have somewhere to steer. If someone is tailgating you, ease off a little or change lanes and let them pass.

3. **Scan ahead and check your mirrors**
   Look well down the road, not just at the bumper in front of you, so you spot brake lights, work zones and hazards early. Check your mirrors often, and turn your head to check blind spots before you change lanes or turn. At intersections, cover the brake and look left, right and left again before you go, even on a green light, and watch for pedestrians and red light runners.

4. **Stay focused and fit to drive**
   Put the phone out of reach and set the GPS before you move. Never drive drowsy or impaired by alcohol, drugs or medication that makes you sleepy. If you start yawning, drifting or missing turns, pull over somewhere safe and rest or switch drivers. Wear your seat belt on every trip, and make sure everyone riding with you does too.

ToolboxKits by ALC Media LLC. Not affiliated with OSHA or the U.S. Department of Labor. Not legal advice.

5 Do not take the bait from angry drivers

If another driver honks, gestures or cuts you off, let it go. Do not make eye contact, gesture back, brake check them or speed up to block them. Slow down, give them room and let them go by. If someone follows you, do not drive home; drive to a police station or a busy public place and call for help, and never get out of your vehicle to argue.

6 Check the vehicle and back up with care

Do a quick walk-around before you drive, and report problems with brakes, tires, lights or mirrors. On a construction jobsite closed to public traffic, vehicles in use must be checked at the beginning of each shift (29 CFR 1926.601(b)(14)). A vehicle there with an obstructed view to the rear may be used only if it has a reverse signal alarm audible above the surrounding noise, or if it backs up only when an observer signals that it is safe.

29 CFR 1926.601(b)(4)

Scenario

Picture this: A worker is driving a company van on a busy road, a little over the limit and close behind a pickup. A car waiting at a side street starts to roll forward, and the pickup brakes hard. The van driver has no room to stop and nowhere to steer. What could the driver have done earlier to give themselves time and space?

Crew discussion

1. What specific driving hazards on our routes should we look out for?
2. What do you do when someone is tailgating you or driving angry?
3. Where are the blind spots on the vehicles we drive, and how do you check them?
4. What makes it hard to keep a safe following distance, and how can we fix that?

Bottom line

Drive as if other drivers will make mistakes, and always leave yourself time, space and a way out.

Free to share and adapt for non-commercial use under the CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 license (creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0). Credit: ToolboxKits, toolboxkits.com/topics/defensive-driving/

Sign-in sheet / Hoja de asistencia

Topic / Tema Defensive driving / Manejo defensivo

Date / Fecha _____

Trainer / Instructor _____

Location / Lugar _____

Company / Empresa _____

#	Name Nombre	Signature Firma	Company Empresa	Date Fecha
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				
10				
11				
12				
13				
14				
15				
16				
17				
18				
19				
20				

Trainer signature / Firma del instructor _____

Time / Hora _____

ToolboxKits by ALC Media LLC. Not affiliated with OSHA or the U.S. Department of Labor. Not legal advice.