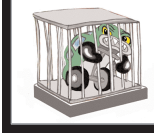
1 Establish Driver-Vehicle Readiness



- Driver Fitness: Mental/Physical
- Butt In Seating Position
- Safety Belts On, Head Restraints Up
- Doors Locked, Windows Up
- Headlights On During Daytime

Would You Drive While Intoxicated?

The first of our ten habits is to establish driver-vehicle readiness. One way that many drivers unknowingly feed the monster is by driving while drowsy. ***Research has revealed that driving while drowsy can be as significant a risk as driving while intoxicated.*** We all know that we should not drive after drinking alcohol; and the more alcohol consumed, the greater the risk. Quite simply, if we drink and drive our ability to process information and make sound decisions becomes dangerously diminished. Similarly, when a driver is drowsy, decision making becomes sluggish and hampered.

Would You Drive While Drowsy?

According to the National Sleep Foundation, "62% of all adults surveyed reported driving a vehicle during the prior year while feeling drowsy. " It is especially dangerous when sleep deprivation combines with the use of alcohol or medications.

Case Study

The crash happened at 1:23 a.m. on an interstate highway. The driver lost control when he spun out on the wet roadway. A tractor-trailer plowed into him. He died from massive head injuries as he was ejected from the vehicle. Although he had a suspended license from previous speeding and DWI convictions, this was his first crash! Factors: night, rain, speed, alcohol, drowsy, size of truck, no safety belts, no skid control, vision error, he always felt he was a good driver.

Causes of Drowsy Driving

Every person needs a certain amount of sleep to operate efficiently—most need 7 or 8 hours. Research indicates teenagers need over 9 hours. If you go to bed later than usual, and get up early, there becomes a sleep debt. The only way to pay the debt is by sleeping. A person can feel alert in the evening, but as the temporary alertness wears off, usually while driving home, drowsy driving occurs.

How To Tell If You Are Sleepy

- Your eyes close by themselves.
- You begin moving you head rearward to better see.
- You can't stop yawning.
- You drift between lanes.
- You keep jerking the car back into the lane.
- You drift off the road.
- There is resistance to moving your eyes for mirror checks.

Solutions to Drowsy Driving

Become aware of your personal biological clock. What times of day do you feel most drowsy? Almost everyone feels sleepy in the middle of the afternoon. When you are in a condition susceptible to drowsy driving, you must aggressively search intersections, check your rear zone frequently, and look for LOS-POT blockages. When your eyes resist the movements, find a safe place — perhaps a well lit parking lot at a fast food restaurant — to rest. Lock the doors. Close your eyes and relax for 15 minutes. If you fall asleep, that should tell you that sleep was needed. If this pattern occurs frequently, investigate the possibility that you have a sleep disorder.

Distracted Driving

A major factor in crashes is distracted driving. If drivers are distracted by texting, talking on the cell phone, or adjusting their MP3 player, they significantly increase their chances of having a crash.

Crashes and stressful situations result from a driver's failure to see and respond to LOS-POT blockages. Drivers believe they can see everything they need to see in order to safely drive the car, but when they get distracted they miss critical information that normally would be easily seen and responded to appropriately. This is called inattentional blindness because the driver is so focused on one thing that the other obvious risk factors are not seen.

There are many distractions that can cause a driver to not see the making of a potential crash.

A driver's cell phone usage has been cited as a major cause for driver inattention. Many states have passed a law banning use of hand held cell phones by drivers. However, research shows that even hand free cell phone usage creates a significant mental and emotional distraction.

Some distractions are unavoidable and others are down-right criminal, such as texting while driving. As of October 2011, each state must meet, or exceed, the National Standards to Prevent Distractions. States must have a law, and enforce it, that prohibits a person from operating a motor vehicle while texting. ***Texting creates five of the six distraction types at the same time!***

Six Types of Distractions

- Mental • Visual
- Emotional • Physical
- Inside the Vehicle
- Outside the Vehicle

Categories of Distractions

- **Those that drivers have the ability to eliminate**
  - Texting • Drinking coffee • Talking on cell phone • Putting on lipstick
- **Those that develop unexpectedly**
  - Disciplining children • Spilling hot coffee • Passengers frolicking
  - Swatting a bee • Missing an exit
- **Those the driver has limited ability to eliminate**
  - Sneezing • turning on heat • thinking about the death of a loved one
- **The duration of an ongoing distraction (in seconds)**

How great of a risk is a distraction?

Not all distractions contain the same amount of potential danger. Use this formula to do a calculated comparison of distractions.

Risk Level Index =

$$\frac{(\text{n of Types} \times \text{n of LOS-POTs}) + (\text{n of Sec} \times \text{Speed})}{\text{divided by1000}}$$

- 2 pts for each type of distraction
- 4 pts per LOS-POT danger zone
- 1 pt for each second of duration
- 1 pt for each mph of speed

Texting creates five distractions at one time: Mental, Visual, Emotional, Physical, and Inside the Vehicle for 10 points. If there were ten LOS-POTs encountered, it is 40 points. If the duration is eight minutes, it is 480 points. If the driver is traveling at 30 mph, it is 30 points. The Risk Level is (10 x40) + (480 x 30) = 400 +14400 = 14800/1000 =**14.8 Risk Level Index.** The larger the number, the greater the risk exposure.

If speed is 0 mph, and out of the traffic flow, there is only one LOS-POT, (your car). **Risk Level** = (10 x 4) + (480 x 0) =40 + 0 = 40/1000 = **.04.** In this example there was 370 times more risk texting while driving than while parked.

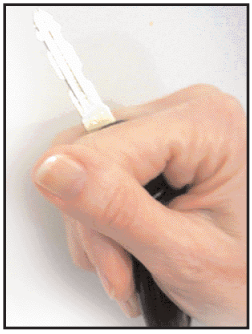
Use the formula to calculate the risk of other distractions (see page 56).

Use Key as a Cue to Fitness

When you put the key in your hand before you walk to the car, let it serve as a cue for you to take inventory of how fit you are to drive. Are you emotionally fit? Did you get a good night's sleep? Can you tell if you are tired?

Approaching the Car

Have your key in your hand with the tip of the key extending out between your index and your middle fingers. This could help avoid a carjacking situation. You do not want to spend unnecessary time digging a key out of your purse or pocket.



Lock the Doors

Locking the doors gives you security from carjackers and better protection during a crash.

Butt-In Seating Position

Push your buttocks all the way back into the seat, then sit up straight. You will gain a firm support and relieve lower back stress.

Head Restraint at Ear Level

The closer your head is to the head restraint, the less movement and the better prevention of neck injuries during rear end crashes.

Keep Your Windows Up

If the driver's window is partially open, a side impact can send the driver's head crashing onto the window's edge, making it like a guillotine.

Use Safety Belts

Fact 1. With safety belts on you will stay in the driving compartment.
You have a better chance of avoiding a crash if you can control the vehicle by staying behind the steering wheel.

Fact 2. With a safety belt on you stay in the vehicle.
A large percentage of occupants who are thrown out of vehicles are crushed by the vehicle falling on top of them after they are ejected.

Fact 3. With a safety belt on you slow your body down gradually.
When the body is abruptly stopped during a crash, traumatic injuries result as the brain crashes into the skull.

Fact 4. With a safety belt on you're not thrown into the crash.
The momentum of the crash will cause unrestrained occupants to fly into the crash.

Fact 5. Occupants with safety belts on will not crash into you.
If you take a sudden swerving or hard braking action, unbelted passengers can come crashing into you, causing bodily injury and loss of vehicle control.

Turn Headlights On

Headlights on during daytime conditions help other drivers detect your vehicle even when the driver is not actively and effectively searching for your car. The headlights can draw the drivers fringe vision to see you.

During bright sunlight conditions there are dark shadows that can easily make a car invisible. With your headlights on, drivers can best detect your car, and you will have fewer cars cutting you off unintentionally.