

# Safety Tips for Volunteer Drivers

## HIGHLIGHTS

### **Common Driving Mistakes**

Outlines the most frequent causes of driving accidents

### **Tips for Defensive Driving**

Reviews strategies for avoiding accidents with other drivers

### **Safety Tips/Reminders**

Shares driver safety practices all drivers should follow

### **Getting the Most Out of Volunteer Driving Service**

Presents 20 suggestions to help volunteer drivers enjoy their volunteer service

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

Please visit the numerous fact sheets and exercises in addition to the planning, implementation, and evaluation sections of the TurnKey Kit.

## EIGHT MOST COMMON DRIVING ERRORS

Although volunteer drivers may have been driving for a long time and may have even taken a driver training course, it may be helpful for them to review the following safety tips.

- 1. Speeding:** Excessive speed is involved in a third of all fatal crashes. Crash forces on impact double with every 10 mph over 50 mph.
- 2. Right of way violations:** These violations are related to more than half of urban crashes and are due to drivers failing to yield right of way.
- 3. Improper turns:** Sudden turns, turns without signaling, or turns when the vehicle does not have the right of way at an intersection can cause serious crashes.
- 4. Driving left of center:** Improper lane changes can cause head-on collisions.
- 5. Improper passing:** Pass only if you really need to. Read the road ahead and check blind spots. Use signals. When re-entering your lane, you should see pavement between the rear of your vehicle and the one you passed.
- 6. Following too closely:** Use your "space cushion." At highway speed, remember the three-second rule—when the vehicle in front of you passes a stationary object, start counting "one thousand one, one thousand two, one thousand three." If you don't finish counting before your own vehicle passes that object, increase your following distance.
- 7. Improper backing:** Back into driveways and parking spaces if possible, not into roadways and aisles of parking lots. Conditions will change more rapidly in the road or the aisle than they will in the driveway or parking space. Don't rely on mirrors. Lower your windows, put your head out the window, and turn around in your seat to be sure you see everything. When leaving a parking space, check behind your vehicle before you get in.
- 8. Distracted/drowsy driving:** Distractions are responsible for 15% of all traffic fatalities. Be aware of your own condition and limits. Never drive if your reflexes or senses are impaired by medications, fatigue, or illness.

*By avoiding the above driving errors, drivers will be taking important steps in practicing safe driving.*

## DEFENSIVE DRIVING - WATCHING THE OTHER DRIVERS ON THE ROAD

**Watch for the other guy:** There are more than 100 million licensed drivers in the United States. Many never learn the rules of the road, don't have much experience, have dangerous driving habits, are driving poorly maintained vehicles, or are under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

**Don't trust the other guy:** Expect the unexpected and be ready to react to someone else's reckless, illegal, thoughtless, or unskilled actions. Expect that they may not yield the right of way or respond as a safe driver would.

**Don't react to the other guy or gal:** If someone cuts you off in traffic or drives in a foolish or dangerous manner, keep your cool and don't do anything to get back at them.

**Let the other guy rage:** If someone exhibits aggressive driving or "road rage" (tailgating, flashing lights, changing lanes frequently, beating yellow lights, camping in left lane, cutting off vehicles, blasting horn), put distance between you and that car. Do not make eye contact, stay in a public area, and call 911 if you feel threatened.

**Avoid the other guy or gal:** Maintain your "space cushion," including when being followed too closely, when you pull up behind a stopped vehicle, and when the other guy stops suddenly or rolls back from a stop.

## 8 SAFETY TIPS FOR EVERYBODY

**Follow traffic rules and regulations:** Know and observe traffic rules. Be alert at intersections, watch cross traffic, signals, and pedestrians. Don't speed.

**Leave a space cushion:** Leave plenty of room between your vehicle and the one in front of you. If someone is tailgating, pull over and let them go by when it is safe.

**Drive defensively:** Adjust your driving to road, weather, visibility, traffic, and your own physical condition.

**Be aware:** Be alert to the hazards others actions might create by staying ready to yield the right of way, even though you might be entitled to it.

**Check your mirrors:** Be sure you can see the vehicles beside and behind you.

**Give warnings in advance:** Signal well in advance of turning. When stopping, make it slow and gradual. When starting again, make sure you do not roll back.

**Look ahead:** Watch traffic ahead of your vehicle and other vehicles to spot situations that might require a sudden stop.

**Maintain your coverage:** Maintain liability coverage on your personal insurance policy and because many drivers do not maintain coverage, consider maintaining uninsured/underinsured motorist coverage at the same limits of liability coverage.

## **GETTING THE MOST OUT OF DRIVING!**

Volunteer driving may be good for the soul, but there is conclusive evidence that volunteering is good for the body! Studies reveal that helping others actually results in physical changes very similar to those gained by exercise. Volunteer driving is an enriching experience in many ways.

Below are a few tips to help volunteers and other drivers get the most out of their driving experience.

- 1.** When you decide to volunteer to drive, make a commitment of time each week that you can live with and stick to it.
- 2.** Make sure that your activities as a volunteer are covered by an appropriate level of insurance.
- 3.** If using your own vehicle, make sure that it is in proper operating condition and clean for your passenger.
- 4.** Take the time to read the materials given to you by your volunteer program and ask if there are things that are unclear.
- 5.** Always be prompt and on time when picking up riders.
- 6.** Let your riders know, first thing, that you are glad to be their volunteer driver.
- 7.** Think of riders as friends. Show genuine interest in their lives and families.
- 8.** Be generous and be concerned for their feelings and comfort.
- 9.** Be conversational and fun to be around.
- 10.** Do not expect too much of your riders. Consider their capabilities and limitations. Provide assistance to them if your program allows assistive support and if you are trained to provide it.
- 11.** Stay positive and remember that riding with you may be the high point of your rider's day!
- 12.** Learn and use the language of love. Treat every rider as an individual, as an adult and, whatever their personal difficulties, emphasize their abilities.
- 13.** At times, it may be necessary to gently assert your authority as the driver. You are the captain of the ship. Do not argue with your rider, but be firm in establishing appropriate travel protocols.
- 14.** Do not lecture riders about their life or your beliefs.
- 15.** Be aware of your own condition and limits. Never drive if your reflexes or senses are impaired by medications, fatigue, or illness.
- 16.** Of course, always follow traffic rules and regulations. Drive safely and do not speed.
- 17.** Most accidents occur at intersections so concentrate on being more alert as you approach, carefully watching cross traffic, signals, lane changes, and pedestrians.
- 18.** Always leave plenty of room between your vehicle and the one in front of you. If someone is tailgating you pull over and let them go by as soon as it is safe.

- 19.** Avoid doing anything to anger other drivers. Give angry drivers lots of room and don't make eye contact.
- 20.** If your rider suffers a medical emergency, first call 911 and get professional assistance. If close to a hospital, get your rider to the emergency room immediately.

**Note:** The resources used for providing the above information were derived from an online risk management course offered to volunteer drivers and developed by CIMA Volunteers Insurance Service and the National Volunteer Transportation Center. You can locate additional information related to volunteer driver programs, volunteer drivers, and passengers who ride with volunteer driver program on the Shepherd's Centers of America website.

When you visit the website, be sure to look at the "Preventer Papers" developed by CIMA's Volunteers Insurance Service.

**For more information please visit the TurnKey Kit's Resources for Planning, Implementation, and Evaluation**

**Also, please visit VIS Volunteers Insurance Service for Nonprofits**