

MSU-ES Dawg Tracks



March, 2010 *Defensive Driving-Rules to Live By - "III"*



MISSISSIPPI STATE
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Mr. Schaller, in his research, established 70 rules for defensive driving for **RoadTripAmerica**. Many of these borders on repetitiveness, so I reviewed the ones that I thought would most effectively help or serve as reminders for us in Extension:

RULES TO LIVE BY-

- **Create space – Use the “two-second rule.”** Many of us were taught to use the rule of a car length for every 10 miles per hour of speed. This rule is no longer recommended because car lengths are too hard to visualize, impossible to visualize when moving and statistics show that it didn't provide enough space to begin with.

It is recommended to allow two seconds of following distance. To familiarize on how to use the two-second rule, watch as a vehicle passes some object, such as shadows or marks on the road - then count to one thousand one - one thousand two. If you pass that spot before getting to two seconds, you're too close and need to back off. Some situations or conditions will warrant allowing a little more than two seconds, such as motorcycles and trucks. Motorcycles can stop faster and trucks will impair your vision. Road conditions like wet pavement or ice will govern your ability to stop, so you have to make an allowance for that.

Drive a mile or two slower. You'll still get there at about the same time, the traffic will be moving out and you'll have sufficient space to avoid getting boxed in. Pay attention to anyone driving next to your vehicle in other lanes. Adjust your speed to remain in the open to avoid any vehicles on your left or right.

It is important to leave sufficient space between you and the vehicle in front of you so that you can pull off at a light if the car stalls or doesn't move. Also, you don't want to be boxed in for personal reasons. In the National Safety Council's Safe Driving course, they recommend to stop at traffic lights with enough distance between you and the vehicle in front of you to be able to see both back tires on the vehicle in front of you. Pay attention to the vehicles driving next to you in other lanes.

- **Avoid Distractions** – When we assume the duties of driving, one of the most important things is to remember that we must be responsible for our actions and the results of those actions. In most accidents, statistics show that the driver, if they had been totally focused, could possibly have avoided the collision - even when the other driver was responsible for the errors that led to the collision.

We can all make the road safer if we avoid driving distractions. Cell phone use is fast becoming one of the most harmful of all distractions with drivers text messaging and e-mailing while at the wheel. Some states have laws against the use of cell phones while driving and other have it under consideration.

Mississippi Senate Bill #2595, if passed, will curb cell phone use while driving in several situations. We can help make our roads and highways safer if we remember Job #1 and let a passenger adjust the CD, read the maps, and reach for food and drinks.

- **Beware of Intersections** – Intersections are one of the most dangerous areas for drivers. An oft-quoted statistic is that 80 percent of all city collisions involving death or injury occur within signal-light (controlled) intersections. The average speed through a city intersection is often above 50 mph and the typical collision is the t-bone, when you are hit in your vulnerable side door.

The majority of collisions at controlled intersections happen within four seconds of a light change. So, it behooves us to slow down, look both ways and look on your left the second time.

When you are entering the intersection zone, watch for the car in front of you. When you stop, allow enough room between you and the first car, so that you can see the wheels of the car in front of you. By doing this, you have better control when the light is changing as you begin to pass through the intersection. If the car in front of you stalls, you'll have room to pull out and around them.

We should take extra precautions when making left turns at intersections. It is hard to see the approaching cars when you are in the line, so you should wait on a light change cycle or pass through the light and use three right turns to get back in the traffic flow. Never try to turn when the area is unclear.

- **Get Rid of Tailgaters** – In the state of Arizona, about 40 percent of all collisions occur with tailgating. Many of them are not minor in nature. Following too closely restricts your vision, making it highly likely that your reaction time is impaired.

Obviously, when we are being tailgated, our objective is to get him off our back. First, try to allow four seconds between you and the vehicle in front of you, and as you are watching, the four seconds gives you time to react. Secondly, as you are moving and the tailgater is too close, slow down (slower than the traffic flow) and give him the room and time to pass round you.

Don't ever hit your breaks suddenly or tap your brake lights. This only irritates the gater and sudden stops are against the law in many states.