

DAWG TRACKS SAFETY NEWSLETTER

MS Agricultural & Forestry Experiment Station
MSU Extension Service



Statistically, driving on a public road is your most dangerous worksite. Transportation incidents continue to be the most frequent occupational fatalities at 38% of all. The majority of those fatalities involve a roadway collision with another vehicle.

The good news is that most crashes are preventable. It's more than just following traffic laws; **proactive driving is the proven strategy that puts you in a position of more control.**

Proactive driving was once called *defensive driving*, but now *offensive driving* seems to be the new catch phrase. No matter how you want to categorize it, the end goal is to get to your destination safely without incident to you, another person, or your vehicle.

The type of driving strategy you use will likely depend on the situation you find yourself in. Recognizing a hazard so you can make a good move before an incident happens is the key.

So how do you recognize a hazard? **Be observant!**

- Avoid distractions - your phone, the music, another person in your vehicle, or rubber necking at whatever is being passed by - watch the road.
- Adjust your rearview & side mirrors so you can easily watch other vehicles coming up & beside you.

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Put your vehicle in a safe position after anticipating possible problems. **It's about you making the first move, not waiting for something to happen then reacting.**

- ✓ Scan intersections well ahead – whether you are approaching one or the one pulling out.
- ✓ Maintaining a safe following distance of at least 3 to 4 seconds. When traveling at higher speeds, when road conditions deteriorate, or behind trailers hauling materials/equipment, a greater following distance is necessary.
- ✓ Leave space when stopped behind another vehicle at a light, and especially in heavy traffic.
- ✓ Never assume the other driver will do the right thing.

Aggressive drivers may fail to yield to other drivers and pedestrians, fail to use turn signals, make unnecessary lane changes, pass on a double yellow line, or tailgating other drivers.

Inexperienced drivers tend to make sudden stops & accelerations or lack the confidence to make turns and merge into traffic smoothly.

Both these types of drivers cause hazards, and the best response is either fall back or go on around them; simply stay out of their way.

It's not always about slowing down; in some cases, the only way to prevent a bad incident on the road is to accelerate to evade a threat. Every situation is different as is the appropriate reaction. Being observant and considerate with anticipation helps you to be a better driver.

Sources:

<https://www.bls.gov/news.release/cfoi.nr0.htm>
<https://www.osha.gov/motor-vehicle-safety/aggressive-driving>