



Short Safety Subject

Short Safety Subjects are provided by the Public Safety Business Center, Fort Bragg, NC. Our intent is to provide safety topics for the purpose of increasing safety awareness and improving safety performance. Additional Short Safety Subjects are available on the PSBC Business Management Web Site at:

www.bragg.army.mil/psbc-bm/PubsAndForms/ShortSafetySubjects.htm

Defensive Driving - Pay Attention

Defensive driving means that you not only pay attention to your driving, but to the other person on the road, too. A defensive driver is prepared for the unexpected during bad weather, night hours and heavy traffic, as well as in light traffic.



IF YOU HAVE BEEN DRINKING DON'T DRIVE

Drinking alcoholic beverages diminishes your brain's ability to make accurate judgments. So, if you have been drinking, either designate a driver who hasn't been drinking or call a cab or friend to drive you. Each year, 23,000 people are killed due to drunk drivers, and almost twice that number are injured. You can avoid becoming a statistic by not taking chances. Many people believe that drinking coffee will "sober them up" enough to drive, but this simply isn't true. Coffee can not alter nor erase the chemical effects that alcohol has on your body. The best thing you can do if you've had too much to drink is to rest. Generally, two and one half hours of rest for every drink is a good rule to follow.

MAINTAIN YOUR CAR IN GOOD CONDITION

The first action you can take as a defensive driver is to make sure your car is in good running condition. Each time you have oil changes, tune-ups or other type of work on your car, record the date in a notebook and keep the car's maintenance on a regular schedule. Make sure tire tread is above the wear bars. Worn tires can blow out, skid and cause accidents. Check break lights and turn signals regularly to make sure they are operating correctly.

DO WHAT YOU CAN TO AVOID COLLISIONS

By driving the legal speed limit and by keeping one car length between you and the car in front of you for every 10 miles per hour you are traveling (e.g., four car lengths at forty miles per hour), you can help minimize the risk of a collision. To avoid being hit head-on, look ahead for potential problems and slow down or get off the road in advance if you suspect a problem ahead. To avoid being hit from the rear, use your turn indicator and slow down gradually. Tap your brake lights a couple of times to warn the driver behind you that you are reducing your speed. Be sure to leave enough space between you and the car in front of you as you slow down in case the driver behind you runs into you.

BE CAUTIOUS AT INTERSECTIONS

Over 2/3 of all traffic injuries occur at intersections, so be prepared when you approach one. Always use your turn signal if you plan to make a turn, and assume the other drivers don't see your signal. Proceed cautiously. Don't assume other drivers will give you the right-of-way.

DON'T DRIVE IF YOU ARE TAKING MEDICATION OR ARE TIRED

Many cold remedies cause drowsiness. Driving when you are tired increases the potential for injuries. If you are tired, do not drive. Pull off the road at a safety rest area and sleep until you are rested and alert enough to continue.

ALWAYS WEAR YOUR SEAT BELT

Over and over, seat belts have proven to save lives. You can increase your chance for survival in an accident if you get into the habit of wearing your seat belt. There are those who think that a seat belt will "trap" them in the vehicle in case of an accident, but many people survive the initial impact and are able to escape, while those who have elected not to wear their seat belts have died from being thrown from the car. If you have a lap belt and a shoulder belt, it's highly recommended that you wear both. A shoulder belt should not be worn alone.

KEEP INFANTS AND TODDLERS IN CAR SEATS

By law, children under four years old must be belted into specially designed car seats and not permitted to stand up and move around while the vehicle is moving. Infants should never be held in an adult's lap. The force of impact during an accident increases the infant's weight 12 times, making it impossible for the adult to hold onto the child.

YIELD AS OFTEN AS POSSIBLE

A defensive driver will yield as often as possible to other drivers who are determined to go first. If you approach an intersection at the same time as another vehicle, allow the other driver to proceed first unless he or she signals to you otherwise. A little patience can save time and injury.