



## Vehicle Rear End Collision Avoidance

One of the most prevalent types of vehicular accidents is the rear end collision. According to The National Highway Transportation Safety Administration (NHTSA), rear end accidents account for 28% of all accidents on US roads costing \$164 billion in losses. These incidents range from minor “fender benders” to accidents that result in major property damage, injury and death. NHTSA estimates that a rear end accident occurs every eight seconds in the United States. As one might suspect, young males have the highest incident rates relative to this type of accident.

The definition of a “rear end collision” is relatively obvious, as in a trailing vehicle collides with a vehicle in front of it. Most common causes include combinations of speeding/driving too fast for conditions, tail-gating (following too close), aggressive driving and inattentiveness. These causes are often compounded by a change in weather conditions and a lack of vehicle maintenance (brakes). However, more than 60% of these collisions are due to driver inattention.

**Avoidance: Avoiding a rear end collision is easy but it takes practice to develop the skills needed.**

### Speeding

- Drive at the posted speed limit. The faster you drive the more time it will take to stop and the less time you will have to react to changes on the road. Your potential for an accident greatly increases the faster you drive. Also, adjust your speed to the driving conditions. If there is rain, snow, fog, traffic congestion, etc., SLOW DOWN.

### Tailgating

- The easiest way to prevent a rear end collision is to follow at a safe distance as in “do not tailgate.” The rule of thumb for allowing a safe following distance between you and the vehicle ahead is a minimum of three seconds for lighter vehicles such as private passenger vehicles including most pick up trucks and six seconds for heavier commercial type vehicles such as tractor trailer units, delivery/pick up box type vans, etc. These distances should increase when weather conditions change, traffic becomes congested, and during high speed travel.

### Aggressiveness

- Younger males as well as females have a tendency to drive aggressively, however it is more prevalent with males. This emotion is compounded when other drivers “cut you off,” won't let you change lanes, honk at you during traffic congestion, anxiousness if late for an appointment or work, etc.
- When you feel you are driving too aggressively, relax and be alert. Reduce your speed, take a few deep breaths, and refocus on the task at hand.
- One of the best things to do is practice being courteous to other drivers.





## Inattention

- This is the major cause (60%) of rear end collisions today, contributing greatly to the tailgating issue. With all the distractions in modern vehicles, cell phones, and our busy work and social lives, many people are driving around on auto pilot. You have seen them and likely have been one. Other examples include talking on cell phones, texting (being illegal has not stopped it), playing with radios or portable music devices, eating, drinking, setting a GPS (newer cars won't allow you to set it while the vehicle is in motion), reading, taking notes, being tired or in a bad mood, looking at billboards and other distractions, and so forth.
- Always focus on the task of driving. When you are behind the wheel, driving needs to be your number one priority. Avoid distractions. Make your phone calls, eat, text, and so on before you start driving or after you arrive at your destination.
- Avoid cell phone use of any kind. Deep South recommends that you wait until you reach your destination or pull on the side of the road to a safe location to make or receive calls.
- If you like to eat or drink in your car, do it when you are parked
- Review your company's vehicle use policy to assure what is and is not allowed while driving a company vehicle. If a policy is not in place, one should be developed and implemented.
- Get plenty of rest.
- Don't abuse drugs or alcohol.

## Other Contributing Factors To Rear End Collisions...



### Weather

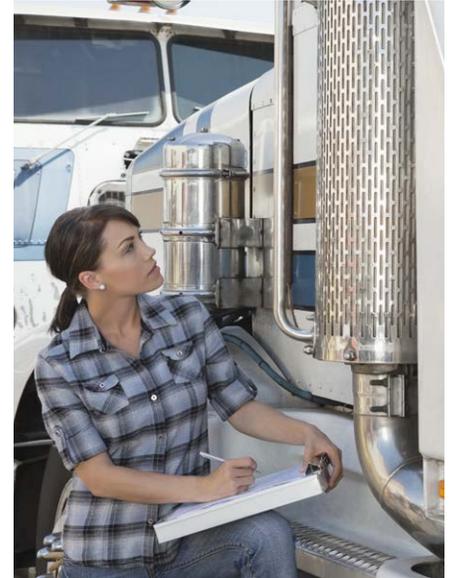
- Always slow down when weather conditions change. The road is slickest when it first starts raining, especially asphalt roads. The heavier the rain the greater the chance for hydroplaning. Slow down. Pull over to a safe place if the weather conditions deteriorate to where you can't see out your window or your vehicle is swerving because of the amount of water on the road. Wait until conditions improve before continuing your journey.
- Check weather conditions ahead of time. Know what to expect where you are heading and plan accordingly.



- Remember that if you have to swerve to avoid a collision always swerve to the right. Rain, and especially ice, may make it impossible to stop in time. You often can swerve to the right to avoid a vehicle in front of you. Never swerve to the left on a two lane road, where the possibility of a head-on collision exists.

### Vehicle Inspection and Maintenance

- Be familiar with the braking characteristics of the vehicle you drive. The larger the vehicle and heavier the load the longer it takes to stop. Beware when running empty or bobtailing. Lightly loaded wheels lock up easily during braking and can cause a jackknife. As soon as you see brake lights on the vehicle ahead of you, get your foot off the gas pedal and be ready to brake.
- Conduct routine vehicle pre-trip inspections, daily for heavy trucks, to assure that vehicle lights are in working order and brakes are properly adjusted. Any concerns noted during inspection should be addressed before the vehicle is used.
- All vehicles should be on a routine preventive maintenance schedule to assure that they are safe for the road.
- If you should break down, raise the hood of your vehicle if you can not move from the traffic lane. Do everything possible to help others see your vehicle. Use emergency flashers, flares and reflective markers. For personal safety, stand away from traffic while you wait for help.



### **Additional Controls That Can Be Used To Help Reduce Rear End Collisions...**

- Stay Alert. While driving you need to be mentally alert for traffic conditions, weather conditions, vehicle movement, and what is going on several vehicles in front of you.
- Constantly scan ahead to see what vehicles are doing. Look for warning signals such as brake lights, blinker use, construction signs, road conditions, sudden lane change, aggressive and slow drivers, other accidents, and etc. Relax but be ready to respond.
- Scan your side and rear surroundings frequently. Keep your mirrors adjusted and be cognizant of your vehicle's "blindspots" so that you can keep most of your attention forward. Keep obstructions off of your rear and front windows such as hanging items from rear view mirror and loading up windows with stickers. Keep the windows clean and make sure that rear head rests are not obstructing your view. Additionally, if carrying a "load" inside your vehicle, make sure items are placed to maximize your "clear line of sight."





- Pay close attention in highway construction zones. The most common type of crash in construction zones is the rear end collision.
- Avoid frequent lane changes and signal well before you turn and change lanes. It is known that this may cause a vehicle to speed up and not let you in, but then again it is probably a vehicle you do not want to be in front of anyway.
- At traffic lights, when the light turns green wait a second or two to assure that the vehicle in front has stated to move and do not just react to their moving/false start. It is always a good idea to give a little extra space between your vehicle and the vehicle in front of you.
- Training! The best way to help control rear end collisions is driver's training to give employees the skills and knowledge on how to prevent them in the first place. Training should be an on-going effort to constantly remind employees of how to approach driving situations and provide them with the skills needed to avoid an accident.
- "Behind the wheels" training is a great way to evaluate drivers before they are hired and to help strengthen the skills of existing drivers' weaknesses. Establish a route that simulates typical job driving conditions to best help with this evaluation. Having a "check ride/drive observation" policy for new hires, where they observe an experienced driver then the experienced driver observes them, is recommended. All training should be documented.
- Another best practice is to conduct MVR reviews and drug test all new hires. Follow up with annual MVR checks and random drug testing.
- With 60% of rear end crashes due to inattention, rear end collision avoidance systems are being developed. Look for vehicles to be equipped with this new technology in the near future.

## Conclusion

Driving is something that we do every day. Most of us have been driving since we were 15 years old and think we are good drivers. Let's face it, many of us have done things while driving that make us wonder how we did not get a ticket or into a wreck. Many of us still do. So, it is important to analyze our own driving habits and correct those areas where we are weak, participate in drivers training when offered by our company to improve our skills, stay alert, and keep a positive and relaxed attitude when we are behind the wheel.

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