

For some of us, the most dangerous thing we do every day is drive to and from work. For others, driving is simply part of the job. To drive safely every day, we must practice defensive driving.

What is Defensive Driving?

Defensive driving is the ability to reduce the risk of accidents or collisions by anticipating dangerous situations, despite adverse conditions and the actions or mistakes of others. This can be achieved by following a variety of general rules and using a set of specific driving techniques in our everyday commute.

1. Do a quick walk around your vehicle to evaluate its condition prior to getting on the road.
2. Secure all loose items in your vehicle. Do not attempt to catch items sliding around in your car.
3. When driving, always keep your eyes moving, looking at your side and rear view mirrors, up, behind and to both sides of the vehicle. Maintain a visual of two to three car lengths in front of you.
4. When changing lanes, physically turn your head around to check your blind spot, followed by checking your side and rear view mirrors.
5. Look out for motorcycles, bicycles, pedestrians and smaller vehicles.
6. Leave at least two car lengths between you and the car in front of you. During inclement weather, increase this to five car lengths.
7. Always give yourself an out. Avoid remaining next to other vehicles, move ahead or drop behind them to allow yourself room for maneuvering in case something happens.
8. Stop before stop signs and then roll forward slightly to get a better look in each direction.
9. Always use signal lights and be sure to signal ahead of time to communicate your intentions to other drivers.
10. Avoid using a cell phone. In Saskatchewan, it is illegal to use a mobile device while operating a vehicle. If necessary, use a hands-free device.
11. Follow the speed limit and pay attention at all times.

Reduce the likelihood of vehicle accidents by always practicing the tips mentioned above.

Remain alert and remember: a defensive driver is a safe driver.



Distracted Driving

Distracted driving is the leading factor in fatal and serious vehicle accidents. Anything that takes your focus away from the primary task of driving, which requires your full attention at all times, is a distraction.

Mobile phones are among the top driver distractions. Those who talk on the phone while driving are five times more likely to have an accident, while those who text are 23 times more likely to get in an accident while driving.

Phones distract drivers in three ways:

- **Visually** - Eyes off the road
- **Mechanically** - Hands off the wheel
- **Cognitively** - Mind off driving

The biggest challenge is that drivers don't understand or realize that talking or texting on a mobile device distracts the brain and takes focus away from the primary task. This cognitive distraction still exists with the use of a hands-free device, or having passenger conversations. Our brain can't perform two tasks at the same time. It handles tasks sequentially and switches between one task and another.

Common distractions drivers need to be aware of and avoid include:

- Eating, drinking or smoking
- Leaning, reaching or adjusting vehicle controls
- Grooming such as shaving or applying makeup
- Reading or writing, including directions
- Driver fatigue
- Driving when emotional - upset, angry, or stressed
- Weather conditions
- Outside distractions, including advertising, movies in other vehicles, wildlife, people and other accidents