



SPEED & SPACE MANAGEMENT

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A primary function of a professional driver is to prevent accidents. Managing the speed of the vehicle to control the safe space around the vehicle is how this is accomplished. A safe attitude as well as being focused and alert to the ever-changing conditions around the vehicle is key to success in this area.

Some tips to share with your staff and drivers to help them safely navigate the nation's highways include:

Scan the road ahead.

Pay attention to the geometry of the roadway, such as curves and downgrades. Be aware of traffic entering and leaving the roadway. Monitor traffic far out in front of you for brake lights or other indications that a hazard lies ahead. Watch for stopped or disabled vehicles that may be blocking the roadway – a school bus, pedestrians, or construction crew may be just around the corner.

Maintain a safe following distance.

According to the National Safety Council, under good conditions, the rule of thumb for calculating the ideal following distance for large commercial vehicles is to maintain one second following distance for each ten feet of vehicle length plus one second for speeds over 40mph. For example, the driver of a 60-foot tractor-trailer traveling 55 mph should maintain a seven second following distance $[(60 \text{ feet}/10) + 1 \text{ second at speeds over 40 mph} = 7 \text{ seconds}]$. To determine whether you are maintaining a safe following distance, select a fixed object, such as a telephone pole, by the side of the road. When the vehicle ahead of you passes the pole begin counting the number of seconds that elapse before you pass the pole.

The number of seconds you count should be equal to or greater than the safe following distance recommended for your vehicle and speed. Following distance should be increased accordingly during inclement road or weather conditions.

Use extra caution during inclement weather.

Adjust your speed to match road conditions. Driving on a wet roadway can increase stopping distance significantly. Be prepared for other drivers who may lose control of their vehicles. Remember that a roadway can be extremely slippery immediately after it begins raining, when road oils are brought to the surface. Leave yourself an "escape route" whenever possible. Yield the right-of-way. Managing speed and space means more than monitoring your own driving. The speed other vehicles are traveling and their relationships to you are an important part of every driving decision you make.

Use caution when turning and changing lanes.

Signal your intentions early and use your mirrors to monitor traffic around you. Watch for preoccupied motorists who may fail to observe your signal or aggressive drivers who fail to yield. Remember the "No Zone." Other drivers may not realize they are in your blind spot.

TO SUMMARIZE:

- Improper speed and space management is one of the most serious errors a professional driver can make.
- Driving too fast for conditions, recklessly tailgating other motorists and failing to yield the right-of-way are just a few examples of poor driving habits that can quickly lead to a serious collision.
- Professional drivers know that driving safely requires a keen awareness of changing traffic, road, and weather conditions.
- Everyone must be aware of their surroundings and be prepared to recognize hazards that may appear suddenly.
- Professional drivers also understand that avoiding accidents often means compensating for the actions and mistakes of other drivers.

The professional driver can avoid dangerous situations by remaining alert and observing the actions of other motorists before they result in an accident.



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