

JOB AID
Avoiding Rear-End Collisions Light
Vehicles

Avoiding Rear-End Collisions – Light Vehicles

Rear-end collisions can be very serious since the vehicle that is struck from behind is usually stopped or moving very slowly while the other vehicle is in motion. The potential for catastrophe increases when the vehicle in motion is a van or truck and the vehicle that is struck is a smaller vehicle such as an automobile. Federal Highway Administration statistics reveal that over 70% of all the collisions involving commercial vehicles are caused by the driver of the automobile.

Even when you allow yourself ample following distance or when there is no one in front of you, be alert for slowed or stopped traffic. Be especially careful in or near urban areas where there is merging traffic. Watch for signs indicating that a lane will end. This often causes congestion and slow-downs or stoppage of traffic.

Practice patience and always drive within the speed limits and a bit slower than the traffic around you. Do not allow yourself to become frustrated or angry with other motorists, and always get rest when you need it.

Common Causes of Rear-end Collisions

1: Lack of Concentration

- Commit yourself to being a professional driver
- Do not allow distractions such as eating, drinking, reading or filling out paperwork, or using a cell phone while driving
- Mentally unload any problems before you get behind the wheel
 - Pull over to a **safe location** and take a walk or call the involved parties to work out the problem
 - Take a break from driving to ponder pressing matters
 - Listen to soothing or instrumental music

2: Following Distance

- Be alert and be prepared for unexpected occurrences. A professional driver must be more alert than automobile drivers
- It takes approximately 335 feet to stop a loaded tractor trailer going 55 mph on dry pavement with proper braking capabilities
- A van or light truck requires 250-300 feet to stop, depending on the vehicle; an automobile takes 200 feet to stop
- Always maintain a 3- to 5-second **following distance** between yourself and the vehicle ahead of you on dry roads; larger vehicles and inclement weather require 6 to 7 seconds
 1. Gauge your following distance by identifying a fixed object such as a sign, white line or overpass.
 2. After the vehicle ahead of you passes the fixed object, count the number of seconds that it takes you to reach the same location. Count by using one-thousand one, one-thousand two, etc.
- If you are maintaining the same following distance as an automobile in a line of traffic, and there is an unexpected hazard causing everyone to brake hard, you will not be able to stop without ramming the car ahead of you

- In urban or congested areas, it is nearly impossible to maintain your 3- to 5-second following distance because traffic keeps filling in the space in front of you

3: *Running Late or Being in a Hurry*

- Manage your own time effectively so you are not running late
- If it is in your control, manage the situation the best you can
- If possible, make a phone call (when parked) and adjust your next appointment
- You can only get to your destination as quickly as safe driving allows

4: *Intersections and Caution Lights*

- Intersections should always be an area of special caution for drivers – be prepared for the unexpected
- Do not let a reluctance to lose momentum prevent you from driving defensively

5: *Construction Zones*

- Construction equipment may unexpectedly pull onto the roadway, or a flag person may be posted to stop traffic
- Dust or mud may be an additional hazard, as well as confused motorists
- Obey the posted speed limits and be especially alert for stopped traffic
- Expect that other traffic will be cutting in front of you when merging or driving on the shoulder

6: *Fatigue*

- Manage your time and sleep so that you have had enough rest prior to driving
- If you find yourself getting drowsy, pull off at the first available safe location and rest
- To help stay awake while you get to a safe rest location, crack your window to let in some fresh air, sing to yourself, turn down the heat, chew gum, or any other appropriate and safe method to stay awake

Do Not Be an Obstruction

- Avoid being rear-ended yourself
- When you are planning to pull over to get some rest, do not pull off on the shoulder of the road
- In poor weather or at night, people will not always realize that you are stopped and may drive toward your rear taillights thinking that they are following you