

## **DEFENSIVE DRIVING BASICS**

### **PHYSICAL CONDITIONS THAT AFFECT DRIVING**

Physical and mental conditions can have a big effect on the way you drive. To protect your safety on the road, be alert to those physical states that may affect you and know what to do about them

Eyesight conditions include poor vision, night blindness, difficulties with glare, and eye diseases (glaucoma, cataracts, etc.).

- Always wear your prescribed corrective lenses. Get regular eye exams. Schedule trips during daylight hours. Avoid wearing sunglasses at night.

Hearing problems include difficulty hearing horns and other traffic sounds and emergency vehicle sirens.

- Be more alert visually, checking the mirrors every three to five seconds and looking around frequently. Keep the radio and the level of conversation low. If a hearing aide is prescribed, always wear it while driving.

Limited mobility can make it difficult to look around and to react to emergency situations.

- Install large, well placed mirrors in your vehicle. If possible, drive vehicles with power steering and brakes for less muscle and joint discomfort.

Illness—and the medications that are taken for illness—can affect driving by lowering your attention level and concentration and slowing your response time.

- Avoid driving when ill if possible. Be aware of your condition and be extra cautious. Know the side effects of medication you take and don't drive if the prescription advises against it.

Fatigue and drowsiness may occur when you are tired, stressed or under a tight schedule. Heavy traffic or bad weather can also bring on fatigue.

- Allow time for rest stops. Adjust the seat to keep your back straight, using firm support pillows if necessary. Open the window. Listen to the radio. Ask your passenger to stay awake and talk with you.

Age—how old you are affects the way you drive. Young drivers often are less aware of hazards. Drivers over age 55 may have changing physical capacities that affect their driving abilities.

- Always stay within the speed limit and pay attention to your driving. Understand the limits of your age. Adjust driving to your physical ability, perhaps by driving more slowly or driving shorter distances.