

Location _____ Trainer _____ Date _____

DEFENSIVE DRIVING

We always hear of defensive driving, but do we really know what it means to drive defensively? Do we realize the commitment that we have to make to become a defensive driver? Defensive driving means driving so as to prevent accidents in spite of the actions of others or the presence of adverse driving conditions. Simply stated, defensive driving means ***no surprises***.

Now let's talk about the commitment required to become a defensive driver. The object of defensive driving is to drive without having a preventable accident. To illustrate this commitment let's look at the detailed requirements of the National Safety Council's defensive driving program:

- Defensive driving requires the knowledge and strict observance of all traffic rules and regulations applicable to the area in which the vehicle is being operated.
- Defensive driving requires a constant alertness for the illegal acts and driving errors of other drivers, and a willingness to make timely adjustments in your own driving so that these illegal acts and errors will not involve you in an accident.
- Defensive driving requires a knowledge of all the adjustments required in your driving for the special hazards presented by abnormal, unusual or changing conditions—in the mechanical functioning of your vehicle, type of road surface, weather, degree of light, kind of traffic, and your physical condition and state of mind.
- Defensive driving requires a thorough knowledge of the rules of right of way and the willingness to yield the right of way to the other driver whenever necessary to avoid an accident.
- Defensive driving requires an attitude of confidence that you can drive without ever having a preventable accident.

There is no doubt that a professional code for defensive drivers is not easy to follow. As professionals, however, you must show the way for other drivers and do your best to drive defensively. Let's take a brief look at how we can accomplish all that is expected by the code. Basically, you must follow three basic steps.

See the hazard. When driving, think about what is going to happen or what might happen as far ahead of encountering a situation as possible. You should never assume everything will be "all right."

Understand the defense. Specific situations require specific ways of handling. Become familiar with the unusual conditions which you may face and learn them well so that you can apply them when the need arises.

Act in time. Once you've noted a hazard and understand the defense against it, act! Never take a "wait and see" approach.

Taking these three steps and keeping good driving techniques in mind, you'll learn to 'give in' a little; to tailor your driving behavior to the unexpected actions of other drivers and pedestrians; to the unpredictable and ever changing factors of light, weather, road and traffic conditions; to the mechanical condition of your vehicle; and even to how to feel.