



Crash...BAM... Out of my Way!!!!

Road rage, and personal responsibility, are the guidelines we have to use to measure our own personal driving conduct. It’s almost a daily chore, every time we get behind the wheel of our vehicles and equipment. Be honest: are you a responsible driver/operator? Let’s hope so.

You witness it with greater frequency as you drive--aggressive driving, driver insensitivity, poor driver performance, and the latest term: road rage! Whatever you call it, it is a growing phenomenon that should concern every driver.

The National Traffic Administration defines aggressive driving as “operating a motor vehicle in a manner that endangers or is likely to endanger persons or property.” Examples of aggressive driving include lane weaving, running red lights, speeding, tailgating, and, in keeping with this “digital” age, the use of obscene hand gestures requiring no translation. How many examples are you guilty of? One? Two? More?

Who are these aggressive drivers? One study found that 21 percent of adult drivers can be termed aggressive and 53 percent of aggressive drivers are women. Also, the most aggressive drivers are poorly educated males prone to violence and/or drugs. Younger drivers are also more likely to drive aggressively.

If you’re driving a company vehicle, you have the responsibility to drive safely and cautiously at all times. Aggressive driving is dangerous, foolhardy, and a threat to every driver on the road.

Checking Your List

- Okay, you’ve just had a fender bender, and your first thought is, “It wasn’t my fault. It was the other guy’s.”
- Maybe it was and maybe it wasn’t. But it sure was somebody’s fault. It wasn’t your fairy godmother’s fault. It wasn’t Seinfeld’s. It wasn’t your guardian angel’s. So who does that leave? You and me.
- Now, I don’t know much about you, but I know I’m an expert driver. And my auto insurance is paid up. So it must be all your fault.
- But, later, when I really stop and think about the accident, I say to myself: “Self, you messed up big time!” And then I review the facts, what I think happened, and what led to the collision between these two vehicles. And maybe, just maybe, it dawns on me that I’m responsible for my own destiny.

Here's a list of questions to ask yourself BEFORE you are involved in an accident:

1. Is my driver's license current? If not, why not?
2. Is my vehicle's state inspection sticker current? If not, why not?
3. Does braking cause my vehicle to swerve right or left?
4. When was the last time I had the brakes tested?
5. Are all of my driving lights (headlights, rear lights, dashboard lights, etc.) in good working order? What about my emergency lights? Have I ever checked them?
6. If I'm driving a company vehicle, does the shop foreman have a maintenance checklist, indicating the repairs and other maintenance done on the vehicle?
7. When was my vehicle last lubricated and all fluids checked?
8. How much tread do I have on all four tires? How about my spare tire?
9. How is my night vision? Slightly impaired? Be honest!
10. How is my DMV record? Any alcohol-related or speeding convictions?
11. Do I respect and honor all speed limit signs? School zones? Hospital zones?
12. Do I leave sufficient time to get to my destination? Or do I make up for leaving late by driving twice as fast? Be honest!
13. Do I take as good care of my company vehicle as I do my personal vehicle?
14. If I'm driving a dump truck with a load, do I always put the tarp over the load so stray gravel, bedding material, and dirt don't fly all over the road and impair the vision of vehicles behind me?
15. If I'm involved in an accident, am I courteous to the other driver and investigating law officers?
16. In the past month, how many times have I used indecent gestures to tell other drivers what I think about their driving? Be honest.

The sixteen questions above, if we reflect on them, are the "attitudes and latitudes" that maybe the singer/songwriter Jimmy Buffet was talking about in his now-famous Key West medley (made popular in the 70's). Then, and now, not too much has changed.